

Sleep Podcast_mixdown.mp3

Voiceover [00:00:02] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.

Bekah Walker [00:00:08] Hello and welcome back to our BeWell podcasts. Today we're going to discuss prioritising sleep and how to increase your chances of getting a good night's sleep. We've had a lot of interest in today's episode, and I'm delighted to be joined by you all today. Before we get started, can we do some quick introductions, so our listeners know who you are and why you volunteered to be part of today's episode?

Lorna Thomson [00:00:28] Hi, I'm Lorna Thomson, I work in the School of Education, I'm PA to the head of school, and I'm also a mental health first aider in the School of Education. So this topic of sleep I'm really interested in and I've had a few colleagues chatting about sleep. So, yeah, I'm looking forward to a good discussion.

Anna Goldhawk [00:00:50] Hi, I'm Anna Goldhawk, I work for AUSA advice as student advisor on wellbeing and accommodation and I volunteered to do the podcast today because I've listened to a few of the others and I recommend them to students. But also as someone who deals with some mental health issues myself and is a notoriously bad sleeper, I thought it would be quite interesting to be part of the discussion.

Georgia-May Drennan [00:01:13] Hi, I'm Georgia-May Drennen, and I'm a fourth year student at Aberdeen, I study English literature and French, and I've come on today because I really enjoyed doing the previous podcast. And also, I just think sleep is a very interesting topic that is so important to everybody, whatever is going on in their life.

Kaleigh Innes [00:01:34] Hi, I'm Kaleigh Innes, and I'm in third year studying psychology and sociology and like Georgia-May, I took part in another podcast, which I quite enjoyed, so I thought it would be good to do another. And I was also just very interested in the topic of sleep.

Bekah Walker [00:01:51] Brilliant, thanks guys, and thank you so much for joining me. So it may seem obvious, but sleep is hugely important, especially when we're studying. Getting a good night's sleep will help you to learn at your best, improve your state of mind, and you will hopefully feel happier too. But what is a good night's sleep? Is the length that's important or is it more about the quality? What do you guys think?

Anna Goldhawk [00:02:13] So as someone who, like I said, is a really bad sleeper, I kind of go between the two, I'll be completely honest. I need a lot of sleep though; I know that much. And I know that if I get anything less than eight hours that's not great for me. But my partner is completely different. He can survive on six and regularly does six, possibly seven hours. So I think it varies from person to person, depending on what you get out of your sleep, I think all sleep metabolisms and your sort of daily routines and lifestyle as well. But I know for me, I think it's about knowing what you need as an individual and trying to achieve that every night. But I'm one of those people that, like I say, notoriously bad sleeper. So I'm constantly waking up. I'm a talker. Apparently I'm a snorer, which I deny. But I'm pretty sure he's got evidence and so, yeah, I think in terms of length or quality, I think it depends on the person and I think it can vary depending on what you need to get out of your own sleep habits.

Kaleigh Innes [00:03:23] For me, I think quality benefits me the most, but I think obviously the difficult part with that is you can never determine the quality of sleep you're going to

get. I can either get a great night's sleep or the worst, it's just so difficult to know. So I think what is kind of the important thing is just trying to make sure that you set yourself up for a good length of time of sleep and obviously hope that you got a good quality sleep. But yeah, I think it's very much a combination of both.

Lorna Thomson [00:03:52] Yeah, I would definitely agree Anna and with yourself as well, Kaleigh. I've got two young children, so before I had kids, I would absolutely have agreed with you Kaleigh, 100 percent. But after having young children and being up through the night and things, I think I'm more so of the opinion that it's not as much, you know, if you get a good night's sleep, it's almost like a bonus. So, you know, especially in the early sort of days, when the kids are very, very young, I think, you know, if you wear one of these Fitbits or something, you know, it tells you how much sleep you've had and if you've had deep sleep and you're like, no, that's not right. But I think, you know, you want to think to yourself that you're having like a good long, conscious bit of sleep, but actually a lot of the time you're not. And then now, I would see that actually sometimes if I do have interruptions in the night, I don't stress about it so much because I know it's okay. You know, other nights will be better and will be easier. But yeah, I would definitely agree that before I would have agreed with Kaleigh. But now I think a long sleep is a bonus.

Anna Goldhawk [00:05:08] I think what I sort of do, I absolutely get you, Lorna, because I think what I sort of do know as I've got older is, I know because I know I'm quite a bad sleeper anyway, naturally. And I do lots of different things, which I'm sure we will come on to talk about, that I try and helps me, but I think what I now do is I make sure that I schedule in my mind at least eight or nine, sometimes even 10 hours. And that sounds extreme. And to a mother, I'm sure that sounds like, oh my god, seriously. But I sometimes schedule that in my mind and say to myself, if I aim to get to bed at, like, you know, 10 o'clock at night and I know that I don't really need to get up until like half seven, eight o'clock in the morning. I mean there's no way, I know I'm not going to sleep for that entire time because I know that I have restless nights and I wake up and it takes me longer to get back to sleep once I've been up and things like that. But because I give myself that amount of time, it stops that stress or panic, kind of trying to sleep, which I always used to suffer from, where I literally would count down the hours. I would be literally be waking up at four o'clock in the morning going, right, I've got four hours to sleep, waking up again at five, right, I've got three hours to sleep. And it's that kind of horrible mental psychological countdown that is actually stopping you from sleeping. And I think by scheduling, I suppose quite a lot of time, that's my sort of rest, relaxation, downtime, sleep time, is that when I don't fall asleep straight away, it's not too much of a stress to me because I just sort of go, right, okay, maybe I'll just read a book for half an hour or listen to a podcast or some music or, you know, that kind of thing. And I think because I schedule that time, it makes it easier to do that. And I think one of the biggest things that I've learnt, I suppose, is that not to just sit and toss and turn and stress myself out. If I've not fallen asleep or have woken up and I've not been able to get back to sleep within about twenty minutes, half an hour, I have to break the cycle. And I get up or, you know, I actually do get up because I have to leave my bed because otherwise, I'll just, you know sit there. So I have to get up either walk around or go for a drink or whatever just to break that cycle of sitting there going, I need to sleep, I need to sleep, I need to sleep. So I think that's what for me, how I've sort of tackled some of that is I give myself a huge amount of time. So like you say, Lorna, that way you don't, you know, sort of stress about, well, it's okay if I'm not sleeping, at least I'm relaxing or that kind of thing. So, yeah, I think that's how I do it.

Bekah Walker [00:07:44] Yeah. I would fully agree guys. And completely like what you said at the start Anna, how much we sleep varies throughout our life as well, like it varies

from person to person and through different stages of our lives. So as adults we should aim for between seven and nine hours approximately every night. But for example, teenagers can sometimes sleep up to ten hours. And like a lot of people say, teenagers are lazy. But actually, there's a lot of research out there to say that there's a lot of growth and development that happens in the teenage years. So they do actually require to sleep for a longer period of time for their bodies to recover. And I guess it's similar to like babies and infants because, of course, you know, when a brand new baby is born they sleep for like fifteen, sixteen hours a day. And that's because there is a lot of growth and development happening at that time. And that's why they need to sleep for so much longer. And I think as you get older in life as well, certainly when you start to become more elderly, often they sleep more regularly, but for less periods of time. So they won't sleep for maybe seven hours at a time, it will be a few hours like dose on and off throughout the day. And that can often be down to a number of factors, but one being that there's not so much growth and development happening at that stage in your life, and also that sometimes they can be on a medication that can disrupt their sleep cycles as well. They might be in a lot of pain or whatnot. So I guess we've kind of explored now maybe we why we sleep and how much sleep we maybe actually need varies from person to person. But what happens when we don't get enough sleep? How do we feel? I certainly have lower moods, struggle to concentrate or get motivated. How do you guys feel in terms of mental health, not having such a good night's sleep and how it affects you?

Lorna Thomson [00:09:39] I actually get really emotional, like very teary. I can't cope with the day, you know, and it's terrible, like anything will set me off. Oh, I'm so tired. And I've always been like that even before I had children by the way. But, yeah, it's a horrible feeling. And then also you're exhausted in the afternoon. Because there's been a few times throughout this pandemic, you know, and you obviously think you're fine and you're really not fine and you don't sleep well at night, and then in the afternoon I'm trying to work and I'm like, I'm so tired, I'm so tired. So then I feel myself getting upset because I'm so tired, which is ridiculous because it's not really a reason to get upset. But I guess it's just a kind of cycle thing, isn't it?

Georgia-May Drennan [00:10:27] I feel the same as Lorna. I'm glad I'm not the only one. And, you know, there's so many times they're just the silliest things that annoy me, and I know exactly why it is. It's because I've not had enough sleep. I've not, you know, rested. I've not let my mind rest because you do need that time to let your body and your mind just recharge. And yeah, if I don't get it. And I also think it's probably a good thing to use as an excuse. You know, you're like, I can't do that today because I'm too tired. And so if we continually don't get the right amount of sleep, then we'll just continually put off tasks. And so then we are not going to be productive at all. But there have been far too many days where I just blame everything on my tiredness, and it is a good excuse because it is reasonable. But there's too many things that aren't getting done because I'm tired.

Anna Goldhawk [00:11:25] It's so good to hear you guys talk. I completely agree with both of what you have said. I am such an emotional person, regardless of whether I sleep or not, if I'm honest. But when I've not slept honestly, Lorna, I feel you so much when you said that. I will cry at the drop of a hat. I cry like at RSPCA adverts. I cry at losing my socks in the laundry. You know, it just can be anything. And the worst part about it is it doesn't matter how I'm feeling, whether I'm sad or whether I'm happy or whether, you know, it's just the tears are just like right under the surface for sure. And I think mental health wise as someone who, I'll put it out there, I was diagnosed as bipolar a number of years ago. So as someone who already manages a mental health condition, I know how important it is for me to get my sleep because I see how negatively it really does affect my mood. And

sometimes for me, if I have a low mood day, that can be a trigger for a sort of bad period of low moods for me. So it's often really important to make sure that I keep on top of my sleep patterns because I know the impact it can have and then the knock on impact it can have. But yeah, definitely emotional. And I make a lot of mistakes. I'm super clumsy when I'm tired. Like guaranteed the day that I've not had any sleep will be the day that I pour my coffee all over my worktop. It will be the day that I drop something on the floor and break it or, you know, that kind of thing. So, yeah, I think in terms of like functioning, when you are tired and you've not had enough sleep, it definitely has an impact. But I think essentially what was said before as well about you feel like your focus and your ability to do anything and you're so lethargic. And I think if that continues on a day to day basis, I think fair enough, we all have days where we feel tired and, you know, we've not had the best night's sleep or whatever, but I think there is that risk as it continues. If that's a continuous thing that night after night after night, it can really start to deteriorate your mental health and your wellbeing. And I think that's sometimes that we don't always recognise, because it's like you say, it is always very easy to say, okay, it's just I'm just tired or I've had a tough day or, you know, I didn't sleep well last night or even the pandemic. You know, we're all feeling lethargic because we're not getting out and doing the activities and the exercise that we used to. So I think it's very easy to use it as an excuse. But because we're easily using it as an excuse, it's also very easy to forget how many times we've said that and how many days in a row we felt the same way because it's easy to mask. It's socially acceptable to be the tired person because of everything that's going on. So, yeah, I think it's good to be able to recognise when that's becoming a problem, I suppose.

Kaleigh Innes [00:14:23] I think what it is about being tired so often, as well as sometimes you can recognise it but often undermine it yourself. As for me, at least when I'm feeling so tired, I know it's affecting just my day in general, be it my mood, my ability, it's just everything. But maybe it's like the night before when I'm struggling to get to sleep, but maybe I try to not acknowledge it too much. I kind of forget about the aspects it's going to actually affect the next day, and then the next day I'll realise that just things are bothering me so much more than it actually normally would. And then I may be struggling to actually, like, process things in the same way. And it just generally affects so much things that you don't always necessarily think of.

Georgia-May Drennan [00:15:07] Yeah, I agree with Kayleigh, and I think I read somewhere that this daytime tiredness after not getting a good night's sleep, the effects of it are really similar to the effects of being drunk. And I was like, oh gosh, yes, it's so true. Like, imagine, you know, sitting down at your computer trying to write an essay after you've been out? And it's just such a similar feeling. And I just thought that was a pretty good way of explaining it and assisting to it.

Bekah Walker [00:15:35] Yeah, absolutely. You guys have raised some really, really good points and I totally concur about the kind of sensation of being drunk when you're tired. And I think I read somewhere as well, like your cognitive thinking ability is like the same kind of concentration in your blood as you would find with alcohol, which is over the above like safe drink driving limit in Scotland, which is actually really, really scary to think of that. How many times are we getting behind the wheel when we're actually too tired to be driving? And, you know, we're not above the legal drinking driving limit, but actually our function and our cognitive thinking is and it's really dangerous. And it's also something to think about for people who possibly like work with machinery in their day to day job, like they're using that machinery, but maybe they're their brains are not fully functioning and obviously that increases your chances of injury. Kind of like you said Anna, like being a little bit more clumsy and even simple rule based decisions might not really be affected too

much by lack of sleep, but things like your creative divergent initiative thinking when you're trying to maybe write an essay or something like that's going to be lacking. So I think it is important to have that balance of, oh, I'm too tired today, so I'll do that tomorrow when your brain is going to have a little bit more capacity, you're going to be able to get the creative juices flowing because you're not feeling as tired. But like you say, it's really important to recognise if that does continue because the consequences of continually not getting enough sleep or having the quality of your sleep can really, really quickly affect your full mental wellbeing. And it can, you know, stimulate a lot of adverse reactions within your body. So it's really something to look out for if it is continuing. And we will just touch a little bit on that later, the ways that we can try to increase our chances of getting a better night's sleep. But, yeah, definitely something to think about. I think we all know that sleep's important for our health, but lack of sleep, as we said, can have adverse effects on our cognitive function, but it can also have adverse effects on our physical health. So a lack of sleep affects our hormones relating to stress, our mood, our appetite, and immune systems. But lack of sleep can also affect our health behaviours. So, for example, if you're feeling tired, you're probably not going to go to the gym. You're probably going to come home and, you know, reach for some chocolate or some sweets. I personally know that I do if I'm tired. Is there something that you guys can relate to? Why do you think that is?

Anna Goldhawk [00:18:26] Comfort, I think is my main thing. One hundred percent. I think it's a comfort thing. And when you're feeling tired, a lot of that can feel like you're low, like you said before, in terms of how it makes us feel mentally and when we feel like that mentally, physically, I think it's natural human instinct to want to comfort and to want to maybe even hide a little bit as well, and, you know, not be as social. And I think that's been really, unfortunately, probably very easy to do in the current pandemic because it's probably a lot easier. I know I'm guilty of not being the most social person anyway. And when lockdown happened and we weren't able to go out, I was kind of like, cool, this works for me. This is, you know, this is what I've been doing the whole time and now it's acceptable to not be as active, but I have I suppose, really missed that, but I think it is kind of about how you, sorry I've lost my train of thought. I guess I'm trying to say that it's kind of about how we feel and what we need to do in terms of comforting ourselves like hot baths or sleeping on the sofa, I think for me, like as soon as I'm feeling tired and I don't want to do anything I genuinely will sit unmotivated on the sofa. But also I think what's really bad is that you then can focus like on your mental health, on how unproductive you're being and how like actually I probably shouldn't be sitting like a slob on the sofa and I've totally wasted my day now and that's actually made me feel worse because I didn't do anything about it. And I think that can sometimes be a bit of a vicious cycle.

Lorna Thomson [00:20:14] Can I add a word to your word there Anna? I would say comfort eating. Yes, that's a major thing. I don't know about you guys, but yes, if I'm tired the next day, I'm like chocolate, crisps, just give me it all. Something in this cupboard is going to make me feel better and less tired, and I know it's here somewhere, but yeah, for sure. Comfort eating is just comfort, isn't it, with all the good stuff.

Georgia-May Drennan [00:20:41] Yeah, I get that and you kind of go, oh, maybe a wee bit of sugar will wake me up, and your like, no it will not you're just making excuses so you can eat rubbish. But I'm tired, so maybe this will make me feel better. Or maybe I need some salt so I'll have some crisps. Maybe I need some sugar, so I have some sweets. Or I'll have some chocolate that will perk me up. Yeah, for like five minutes.

Anna Goldhawk [00:21:04] It's so funny, I completely agree. My partner has got to the point where he's even put a sticker on our, like, sweets cupboards that says you're not hungry, you're thirsty. Which I thought was genius, to be fair.

Bekah Walker [00:21:19] Yeah, definitely. I think like you say, Georgia-May, like you have that sugary hit. It does help, but it's very, very short lived. So like I think our last podcast was on diet and nutrition. So we probably would have covered that stuff within that episode. But yeah, I think it's looking for foods that will fill you up for longer as well, which slowly releases your energy rather than just a quick burst of something that maybe a bar of chocolate will give you. But definitely I know like having like some pasta does not give you the same hit as a bar of chocolate does. So it is about that balance, too.

Kaleigh Innes [00:22:04] I think when I'm tired the thing that I struggle most with is like the whole thought process of actually doing something, because I know that afterwards I'm going to feel more tired when I already feel tired just now. And it's just the whole thought of that is just so like mentally draining. So I'm like, I'd just rather not do it at all. And it just kind of has like a knock-on effect on absolutely everything. And like you have said, like trying to get like a burst of energy through like a sugary food or drink. Like I become quite reliant on that. And then very like short term, I will get that. But then afterwards I just feel so much worse because it's went away and I'm back to feeling tired and I'm like, why did I even bother? It's just not even helped.

Bekah Walker [00:22:51] Yeah. One hundred percent. It's really interesting that we're all kind of displaying similar experiences, which is, you know, it's really good for me to know that I'm not the only person that struggles with that and will reach for the sugary treats way too often. So I think it's clear that nearly everyone at some stage in their life will experience difficulties with sleep, whether it is falling asleep or staying asleep. So there is like a number of things we can do to increase our chances of having a good night's sleep. Do you guys have any sleep hygiene strategies or tips that you use? Maybe if it's like a bedtime routine that you have that you might want to share with our listeners that could help them have a better night's sleep?

Georgia-May Drennan [00:23:33] So I really like scheduling my time, and I know I said at the beginning, kind of in your head scheduling. I actually do schedule it. So on like my Google calendar, I've actually got like a colour for sleep just because I feel like I will actually do it. But an hour before when I want to sleep, I have a number blocked out for like a wind down session, and I have an alarm that goes off that talks to me and says okay Georgia-May get ready for bed now. Because I'm so used to that, if that alarm doesn't go off, I don't know what I would be doing, because I need to have that kind of schedule for me. And that's after, like, ages of trying to work it out. And I'm like, okay, I think I've finally found something that does work. But I mean, I think it's just so important to try out different things and find what works for you, because I could say, oh, this is what I do, but that's not going to help like every single person, you know, and it's different. I don't want to stick to an exact thing, so you know it's different each night. See, maybe one time I read for a bit and like, see, you could do a bit of stretching or whatever. But then most nights it's just like maybe putting on a meditation or even just like watching something with the brightness down instead. Because I know there's this whole thing about blue light and you shouldn't go on your phone two hours before bed and all that. But realistically, for me, any of the things I use to wind down are on electronic devices. So it's a bit difficult to make use of things like Headspace or CALM when I need to go on my phone. So I think just making sure that if you are using, you know, like an iPad or a phone or whatever, that the brightness is down or it's a nightshift mode, you can get things like that. So I think just kind

of playing about with different things and finding what works for you. I definitely feel like setting yourself some time before even going to sleep is a really good way of winding down and getting ready to relax.

Kaleigh Innes [00:25:30] I think that's such a good idea what you said about trying to actually schedule in your sleep by putting it as an activity, because when you think of it, sleep is an activity itself. I've tried to see it that way, but I'm quite bad for actually acted upon it. And I'll try and schedule in time to do other activities during the day be it exercise or university work or reading. But sleep, I just don't. And then also I wonder why I'm struggling to sleep and it's because I can often try and just like cram in trying to fall asleep. Then I try using strategies such as trying to just focus on breath work, like meditation stuff when I'm trying to sleep. But I think because I can often try this once it's too late, once I've already gotten into bed knowing that I need to be up within too long, it becomes quite a bit of panic mode. So, no, I think what you've said such a good idea and something that I'll definitely need to try and treat it like and activity like I would for everything else.

Lorna Thomson [00:26:27] It's funny because I go back to having the kids, and health visitors and nurses put such a big thing on the bedtime routine for babies that actually for adults, it's just not really a thing. But more and more now, you know, as you've said, you've got what you do and your calendar. But more and more I'm reading and I'm seeing that it is a thing for adults, you know, having an actual bedtime routine. And I've certainly in the last few months I've started reading. I come to bed and then I read my book. And that for me really helps my mind wind down. I've also stopped watching the news before I go to bed because watching the news just puts the fear in me and all the coronavirus, I'm like, no, I don't need to watch that. Just read your nice book about your love story Lorna, there's a happy ending there, it's not sad. And for me that really helps. But yeah, the calendar thing, it's really interesting that actually, because, you know, as you see, there's always a big thing about kids and babies bedtime routine but for those adults, you don't even think about it, do you?

Anna Goldhawk [00:27:30] I think that's so true and I think as adults as well, we're also, I think, quite quick to sacrifice sleep for other things. So as much as we're saying that sleep is important and that we need to schedule the right amount of time because it's about how we function and the impact it can have when we don't get our sleep. But I think all of us at some point have been guilty of going, you know what I can do with less hours sleep. I just want to watch this last episode of this, or, you know everybody's done the binge watch, I'll just another episode it's alright I can handle tomorrow with one hour less sleep. And I think as adults, we're quite quick to sacrifice sleep for other things. I remember as a student, I'd be the same on a night out and I'd say to myself before to go out, I know I've got an early lecture tomorrow morning, so make sure I'm home by this time. And when you're out and about with your mates and you think, okay, it doesn't matter that I'm tired at that lecture tomorrow, like I'm having fun. And so I think sleep is something that we sometimes see in our schedules as this movable thing and where we can grab a little bit of extra time back if we need some more time in our day. So I think it's maybe about trying to change that kind of process of it. And that's what I've tried to do in terms of my sort of sleep routine. So I was quite guilty of that. And I wouldn't really see sleep as sleep it was like this time that I could claw back for other things and more interesting things to be doing during that time. But for me, I think one of the biggest things, I agree with yourselves turning off like social media for me in particular, I don't use it a huge amount, but certainly before bedtime I'm off it entirely. And caffeine, I'm an absolute coffee fiend and it does get me through the day. I will want to drink a lot coffee, but I have to give myself a cut off time so that I'm certainly not drinking caffeine two or three hours before bedtime because I know how much it

affects me. And I guess the other one for me is listening to something, and with all my rocking gigs in my in my earlier youth, I've got quite bad tinnitus in one ear, so I can't get to sleep unless I've got something playing. We recently moved to a much quieter area whereas I used to live beside a very busy road and that was great for me at night because it was that rumbling of traffic and stuff. That's something that I used to find quite soothing, especially when you've got tinnitus. So for me, listening to something like the BBC Science website has been an absolute godsend and you can always find stuff on their podcasts, drama's, true crime, that kind of stuff. So, yeah, anything and anything to listen to before going to bed and reading as well for sure.

Georgia-May Drennan [00:30:01] And I think you're so brave for listening to true crime before you go to bed, I know I feel like, oh my god, I am going to have nightmares. No, it's great, I'm so impressed. I couldn't do it. But I think also it's important to say that you have to acknowledge your environment. I mean, it is all very well for me to say, oh, I do this or do that. But since Christmas, I've moved back home and my night routine is very different to what it was when I was in Aberdeen, living in a flat where I could be very selfish. I am back in a family of five with a dog, younger brothers and sisters, one bathroom, and so even things like that. I need to make sure I know when I've got time in the bathroom to do my facial, you know, wash my face, whatever it is. So it's not as easy for me to say, oh yeah, I go to bed at ten o'clock, I'll be asleep by eleven and I'm up at seven. Like, I can't rely on that anymore because there are so many things going on or people talking outside my door or people shout up the stairs and I'm like, I'm trying to sleep. So I think just finding ways of obviously adapting to situations. Also before I knew that I could work in the living room or the kitchen or my desk, but I think establishing boundaries within the spaces that you're in, especially when you're working from home to know, like, that you've got a sleep space, you've got a workspace. Because just mentally for me, I like to know that I have those different areas for different activities and I'm more likely to just be ready for sleeping in a better state than if I'm sitting at a desk. You know, my brain just kind of works in that compartmentalised way.

Anna Goldhawk [00:31:54] Yeah. I was just going to very quickly add to that what you're saying, because I completely agree. And I think when you think about your environment, I think especially with us all working from home, I know that a lot of students will be sitting in bedrooms working and doing their essays. So their workspaces, their sleep spaces, their relaxed spaces is their everything space. And I think that's a really difficult situation to be in, because certainly for me, I actually only just last weekend totally decluttered my bedroom because it was really starting to get on top of me. Like I'd come to bed and realise that actually I wasn't relaxed in the space. I think lighting is also really important. I got myself I sort of like mood lamp light thing, it just sort of like softens the lighting before bed and things as well. So I think thinking about your space and your environment in terms of like what's physically around you as well, is really important in terms of getting a good night's sleep. I think in terms of like overall good sleep hygiene it's kind of about and sort of encompasses both like your environment as well as like the habits that you then use. So your environment during the day is as important as getting enough sunlight, trying to get outside, those kind of things to enhance the fact that you will hopefully get a good night's sleep in the evening. So I think it's about combining those things and looking at what your environment is and what you can do and what habits you can do, not just like just before bed, because the bedtime routines are important. But, you know, what habits are you doing during the day that make sure that you're getting a good night's sleep? So like naps is a really good example for me. Like, I cannot nap. I will not allow myself to nap because I know that it will mean that I will not sleep that night, or it will take me a long time to fall asleep. Whereas other people I know really benefit from like very quick ten or fifteen

minute nap in the afternoon because it re-energises them. But they're very strict with themselves about how long they allow themselves to do that kind of thing. So yeah, I think it's about combining, looking at your environment as well as trying to put together a good routine and good habits.

Lorna Thomson [00:33:53] It's funny that you mention the environment and that's so true. I mean, for the students and staff, you know, everyone's working from home, studying from home and we're living at home as well. And that is one of the things that keep feeding back from like staff members is it's difficult to separate the two. So I know a couple of friends that have started, what they do is and the morning they go out for a walk before they start work or start their studying and then come back in the house and then again in the evening they do it after they're finished, they go out and come back. And sometimes it's just a twenty minute walk around the block. But it's just that separation, you know, trying to get out as well for fresh air, just trying to separate the work day from the life day, which is just a challenge for us all just now, but it's just to try to change and separate things a wee bit, because, you know, somebody mentioned the other day their house is there safe space, that's their chill space. At the moment, there's no chill space or safe space because you're studying there or working. And so just trying to get out the house and just get fresh air, I think, for me as well, that really helps me.

Bekah Walker [00:34:52] You guys have raised some great points. There are definitely a few things there that I can pick up to try and improve my chances of getting a good night's sleep. I really like what you've said Georgia, about blocking out the time to go to sleep as an activity, like it might sound a bit silly, but actually you're so right. I think it was you Anna that said that so many times that we can just think, oh, yeah, I'll do that, and then you take away the time that you should be sleeping, and it is like, oh, I'll watch another episode, oh what time is it? Yeah, go on and I'll watch another episode. And it's not till the morning that you actually regret it when you've got to try and get up. Or I suppose right now it's a little bit easier to think I can turn my alarm off, it doesn't take me long to get ready anymore, you know, I'm going from my bedroom to my spare room, I'm not having to do the commute to work. But I also feel as well, like within the lockdown and being at home, I found that I actually am sleeping much more and much better because I am having more time at home. I'm normally on a normal day to day, I'd get up, I'd go to the gym, I go to work. So I'm out of my house for so long that I have very little chill time when I come home. So you want to kind of harness that and chill for as much as you can. And I've certainly been guilty before and been like, oh, I don't want to go to bed because then when I get up I have to do all over again. I don't quite feel like that now with being at home because I feel like I do have a little bit more chill time. So I am thinking, well, I'll just go to bed. And I've noticed such a difference. I do check my Fitbit app and there's many, many times now way more than what there was before that it was saying that my sleep quality is being good and I'm hitting my target every night of getting at least seven and a half hours sleep. And it's really, really helped me in terms of like my motivation for the day. So, yeah, I find it super helpful. And I guess there is things as well like I find that I get a much better night's sleep if I exercise, but I have to kind of exercise during the day because if you exercise too close to the evening then you'll still have that endorphin hit and you're going struggle to sleep because you've got like your runner's high or, you know, whatever. So I think it's important to kind of have that healthy lifestyle, but also watch the timings. I have the same with eating for me, I can't go to sleep with empty stomach or a full stomach. So I've got to, like, think, what am I going to eat for when am I going to go to bed. Whereas like my husband, he has like a massive bedtime snack that helps him go to sleep. But for me that would just keep me awake. So it is all about what works for you. There is kind of no right or wrong way. Like the ultimate goal is to get a good quality night's sleep. And if you have that, then

you've achieved your goal then like amazing as such. I think this episode has been so good. I've learnt so much from you guys and it's been so interesting to hear your perspectives, and it's been so good to realise that we're not alone in terms of sometimes struggling to sleep. But there are things that we can do to hopefully help. And there are certainly things I'll take away and try. Hopefully you guys have learnt something too and hopefully so have of our listeners. I would just like to thank you guys for giving up your time and joining me today, it's been so great. And if any of our listeners want to know any more information about any of the themes we've discussed today, if you just visit the University of Aberdeen website and search for BeWell, there will be loads of links and tips there that can maybe help you get a better night's sleep as well. So thank you all so much for tuning in. I hope you've enjoyed the episode. Take care and I'll see you next time.

Voiceover [00:38:46] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.