

How to Get Good Rest

Rest is a natural requirement for the human body. It allows the immune system the essential resources it needs to heal and restore. Sleep naturally provides restoration, but for many with ME/CFS sleep is disrupted, disordered, non-refreshing.

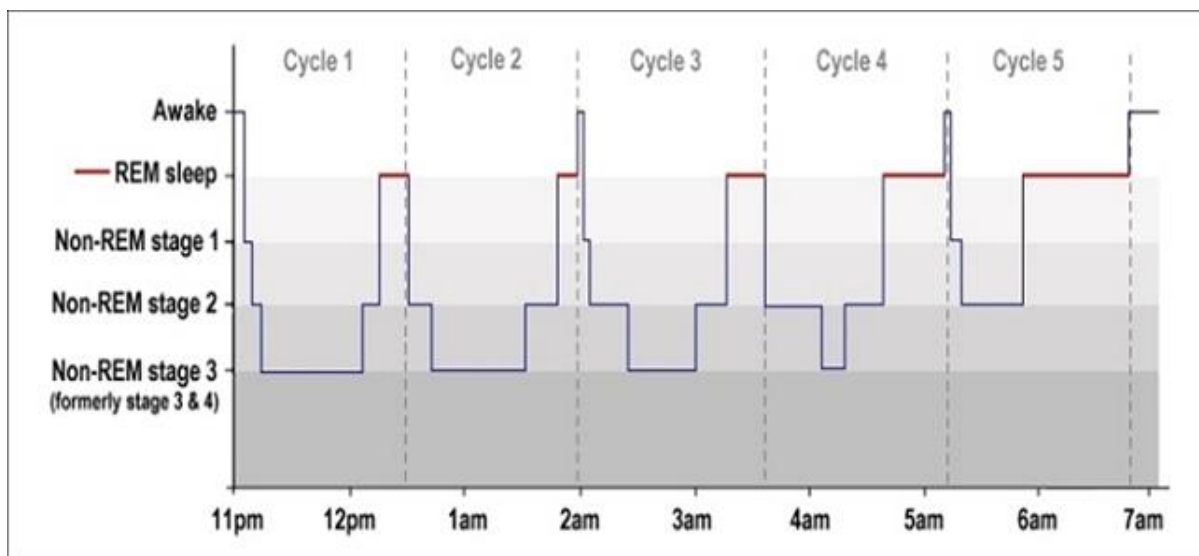
Today we will be discussing sleep cycles, the impacts of disordered sleep, and sleep hygiene ideas. The importance of rest and four types of rest will be discussed through the lens of the Maori Health model of Te Whare Tapa Wha and we will also share some great words to encourage a change in your mindset around resting.

SLEEP

Sleep Cycles

The pineal gland releases melatonin to control our body clock, with peak levels occurring at night to make us feel drowsy. Regular exposure to daylight maintains our body clock rhythms and regulation of melatonin.

We cycle through 4 stages of sleep several times during the night, each cycle lasting approximately 90 minutes.



<https://www.mattressadvisor.com/sleep-stages/>

Chemical reactions during sleep

Growth hormone is released during the deep sleep stage 4 and REM sleep, which is responsible for the many repair and restorative processes that occur. During these stages, the brain also ceases active processing, which adds to high quality sleep.

With ME/CFS & FM, it is suggested that the deep sleep state and REM sleep is inadequate, so regardless of whether you sleep 16 hours or day or only a

few, restorative processes are not fully functioning. A vicious cycle starts – healing is insufficient which impacts Growth Hormone function, which is required for healing and restoration.

Impacts of Disordered Sleep and Sleep Deprivation

With hypothalamic dysfunction causing disordered sleep, a vicious cycle therefore begins with poor sleep further suppressing the hypothalamus and growth hormone production. Pain and fatigue also impact sleep, making it difficult to get to sleep. Getting to sleep can be difficult for many living with ME/CFS & FM. This is due to the continually aroused stress response in the body making quieting the brain waves into the delta zone, which is needed for sleep, difficult or impossible. You may know this state as being “wired but tired”.

Sleep becomes fitful and is devoid of calm when you do not obtain enough deep sleep and REM sleep. The mind remains alert, and you may find your legs restlessly move in response to pent-up muscle tension. It can have profound effects on thinking, emotions, and physical health. Sleep deprivation results in immune dysfunction, and blood pressure, hormonal systems, temperature control systems maybe impacted. An increased risk of cardiovascular complications may also occur.

Strategies/Sleep Hygiene

So, what can be done to help you get to sleep, stay asleep and have quality sleep? Routine is very important before sleep, if you don't have one, create one! Sleep hygiene is a name given to a night-time routine you undertake before going to bed that tells your brain and body you are preparing for sleep.

What are your routines? What strategies do you use?

Ideas to consider:

- Get at least 10-15 minutes of sunlight directly on your face/skin without sunglasses each day where possible. Sunlight regulates melatonin production
- Ensure your bedroom is cooler than the rest of the house. Have a window slightly ajar to allow cool air in.
- Dr Sarah Myhill states the importance of having a dark bedroom. Any glimmer of light on your skin will reduce melatonin production. So, ensure you have heavy curtains and no light peeking through. If your bedroom is lit by a streetlight contact the council and have them change the light to a yellow/red light or ask to have it put on a timer, so it turns off.
- Check the light bulbs in your house, if they are white or bright, change them to warmer tones.

- Reduce the amount of screen time in the hours leading up to bedtime. Screens contain blue light which stops the production of melatonin. Or try screen filters/glasses of yellow or amber shades
Studies have shown. Access to a screen-media device in the bedroom at night is associated with shorter sleep duration, later bedtime, and poorer sleep quality. The studies suggest turning off screens and devices one hour before bed to reduce impact on poor sleep quality.
- Undertake a sleep study if you can to determine whether sleep apnoea is an issue for you. Very important to treat sleep apnoea.
- In the hour before bed – create a routine.
- No stimulation. No adrenaline producing movies, no arguments, no family matters discussions, park them for the evening to be picked up the next day. Avoid coffee after mid-afternoon. Avoid Alcohol.
- Limit fluid intake after 6pm if our sleep is disturbed with the need to pee.
- Apply some relaxation practices in the evening. Gentle stretching to ease tension, breathing, meditation to help calm the mind.
- A warm bath or shower before bed can be helpful for some.
- A small carbohydrate snack before bedtime can help reduce nocturnal hypoglycaemia, which manifests as night sweats and vivid dreams, which disrupts sleep.
- Symptom relief is vital to ensure an undisturbed night. Take appropriate pain relief and medications for sinus, reflux, nausea etc..
- Consider sleeping in separate beds if your partner snores.
- Dr Sarah Myhill speaks of creating a sleep dream. This is using visualisation to image yourself in a relaxed warm comfortable space where sleep comes easily to you.
- She also speaks of the sleep wave. Sleep doesn't quietly creep up on us in the evening, it comes in waves every 90 minutes or so. You may find yourself nodding off in from of TV at 7.30, then after a time you are more awake again. So, by 9.00pm another sleep wave will start to hit, so be in bed by this time so you can" ride the wave" to sleep.

Resting

It has been suggested by Dr Dalton-Smith in her book Sacred Rest that **"Good sleep results from good rest"**. Approaching sleep in a restful state may assist the ability to fall asleep sooner and help provide a more restful, restorative sleep. Although the author does not focus specifically on ME/CFS/FM, some of her ideas are very fitting.

I can relate Dalton-Smith's book to that of Te Whare Tapa Whā, a Māori Framework for Health. It speaks of the balance between 4 keystones of wellbeing – physical health, mental health, relationships/family and spiritual health. All 4 foundations need to be strong to hold up the roof of the house (the human being). With

ME/CFS/FM, at least one keystone is impacted. Naturally physical health is one, and with chronic health conditions so too can emotional and mental health be impacted. When our health impacts our goals and dream for the future, this can then impact our spiritual health.

So let's look at resting through the lens of this framework. Today we will briefly look at **4 Types of Rest – Physical, Mental, Emotional and Spiritual**.

Physical

HOW MANY OF YOU ATTEND TO PHYSICAL RESTING? WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU APPLY?

Are you suffering from physical rest deficit? (Are you living outside of your energy envelope?) Signs include:

- Lack of energy
- Tired but wired
- Frequent episodes of cold and illness
- Frequent muscle pain and soreness
- Depend on substance for energy – caffeine, sugar
- Depend on substances to wind down – alcohol, drugs, medication, comfort food

Ideas on how to Physically Rest

- Active physical rest – stretching, breathing exercises, soaking in the bath. This form of rest releases tension in your muscles and restores calm to the body
- Listen to your body and note where the tension is held.
- Passive physical rest - lying down either flat on the ground or with legs raised on the couch or up the wall, whatever you find most comfortable. Focus on your breathing.
- Be in a quiet environment to allow your senses to rest also.

Mental

HOW MANY OF YOU ATTEND TO MENTAL REST? WHAT ARE YOUR STRATEGIES?

Mental Rest Deficit signs include:

- Brain Fog!
- Can't mentally keep up with conversations or your to-do list
- Experience irritation and frustration when thinking about your day
- Avoid activities in the fear of error or failure
- Snappy at others over irrelevant things
- Feel overwhelmed by daily tasks.

Ideas on how to Mentally Rest

- Observe what thoughts occupy your mind. Don't analyse or judge them, or try to understand them, just notice and acknowledge them.

- Create a mental sanctuary to allow the mind to rest. Choose to reframe from any negative thoughts and think caring and nurturing thoughts of love, joy, kindness, gratitude, peace, gentleness.
- Make a conscious effort to fill your mental space with restorative thoughts daily. Positive affirmation statements can be very helpful.
"I accept the things I cannot change..."

Emotional

HOW DO YOU ATTEND TO YOUR EMOTIONAL REST? WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE?

Many things can lead us to emotional fatigue

- Regular negative emotional exposure from others. Trying to live up to demands, and societal expectations
- Feeling undervalued in your relationships and associations
- Feeling pressure to regularly "perform"
- Not living your own authenticity and truth (not accepting your health limitations)

Are you suffering from emotional rest deficit? Signs include:

- A tendency to focus on failures and flaws
- Self-doubt and insecurity, which prevent you from trying new things
- Constantly compensate for who you are with apologies or clarifications
- Beat yourself up when you make the smallest mistake
- Feel depressed and angry when you think about your life
- Excessively worry or display feelings of anxiety about your situation

Ideas on how to Emotionally Rest

- Practice mindfulness to notice your emotions. Acknowledging our emotional feelings can help to release them from being bottled up.
- Practice S.T.O.P

S = Stop, be still, sit down

T = Take a slow deep breath, with long exhale

O = be open and observe, what is going on right now physically, emotionally mentally. Notice sounds, smells, etc..

P = Proceed mindfully, be kind to yourself and others

- Cease comparisons between yourself and others – comparisons limit individuality and destroy the ability to be authentic. Trying to fit in is emotionally exhausting. Stop hustling for your worthiness. Instead rest in the self-awareness of your uniqueness.
- Risk Vulnerability – When we conceal our truth or deny our reality, we only hurt ourselves. Accept your health and diagnosis, knowledge is power

- Be emotionally aware – notice how toxic personalities impact you negatively. Evaluate your relationships, make appropriate changes by putting in place personal boundaries.

Spiritual

HOW DO YOU ATTEND TO YOUR SPIRITUAL REST? WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE?

ME/CFS may result after traumatic experiences. Trauma can leave us feeling broken. The dictionary defines “broken” as shattered into separate parts, disconnected, disunity, not complete. Trauma, including chronic illness, penetrate into our very soul, the core of our being, breaking our faith and wounding the spirit causing a disconnect with ourselves. It changes how we view ourselves. (Note: faith can be religion, or some other spiritual system that can bring enlightenment and security to your life).

Signs of Spiritual deficit rest

- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment
- Feeling helpless, hopeless, trapped or defeated
- Lack of motivation
- Feeling numb and apathetic or depressed

Ideas on how to Spiritually Rest/Tend to your Spirit

- Find ways to nourish and replenish your soul that encourages the creation of a loving relationship with yourself
- Participate in activities that make you feel whole, more alive and at one with the universe
- Read books or watch movies that inspire you
- Try new things like yoga, meditation, prayer
- use encouraging affirming affirmations
- Notice the beauty in nature – a sunset, a moonrise, colour of flowers and leaves changing in the seasons
- Be creative with art or writing a journal about your experiences
- Use mindfulness and give yourself permission to feel the range of emotions associated with your brokenness.
- Listen to music that speaks to and soothes your soul
- Humour is good for the spirit, body and immune system. Also helps with maintaining a positive attitude and a healthy perspective. Give yourself a reason to laugh everyday – learn to laugh at yourself too
- If nothing else, make peace with where are right now in your life.
- Know that your value is not in what you accomplish or what you own, but simply in the fact that you exist.
- Give yourself permission to nurture and love your whole being and who you are.

Do you feel guilty resting? Do you think you are being lazy?

Here are some snippets from Sacred Rest by Sandra Dalton-Smith that may encourage a change in your mind-set.

"There has to be a bridge between good and bad sleep, and that bridge is rest. Sleep is solely a physical activity, Rest, however, penetrates into the spiritual. Rest speaks peace into the daily storms your mind body and spirit encounters. Rest makes sleep sweet".

"I am resting because my body is weak, I need to remember that I am not wasting the day doing nothing. I am doing exactly what I need to do. I am recovering.

"Rest is about replenishing, restoring, renewing, recovering, rebuilding, remoulding, and repairing".

"Rest is a vital activity required to attend to the garden of our lives. Rest is the water that replenishes dryness, the fertilizer awakening us to growth and greatness".

"The body requires an opportunity to heal, and rest from movement, the mind a reprieve from thinking, emotions need a release and the senses desire to be quietened".

"Exchange guilt for the freedom to choose best".

"It means saying NO, having limits with ourselves and others. It takes courage to rest in the midst of an outcome driven society".

"Watching TV as a means to rest – escapism is not rest".

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