SLEEP AND THE NEURODIVERGENT BRAIN

Sleep strategies that work with your brain

There's no single right way to sleep well. Pick one idea, try it as an experiment for a week or two, and keep what helps.

1 Get curious

- Notice what actually happens at night, without judging it.
- When do you feel sleepy? What keeps you up?
- Look for patterns around your cycle, shifts or busy days.

2 Work with your body clock

- If you're a natural night owl, a slightly later bedtime may be kinder than fighting it, where life allows.
- Daylight soon after waking can gently shift your clock earlier.
- Keep your wake-up time roughly similar, even on days off.

3 Make winding down appealing

- Build a menu, not a rulebook: audiobook, podcast, colouring, a warm shower, a favourite comfort series.
- Choose what you'd genuinely enjoy tonight.
- Novelty is allowed - swap things around when they get boring.

4 Make getting to bed easier

- Set an alarm to start winding down, not just to wake up.
- Break it into tiny steps: stand up, phone on charge, teeth.
- Use a cue to get moving, like a song, a voice note or a body double.

5 Meet your sensory needs

- Try earplugs, white or brown noise, an eye mask or blackout blinds.
- Notice bedding textures, weight and temperature.
- A weighted blanket or cooler room may help you settle.

6 Quieten a busy mind

- Keep a notebook by the bed for a quick brain dump.
- Write tomorrow's to-do list before bed, so your brain can let go.
- A familiar story or podcast gives your mind something gentle to follow.

7 Screens: kind, not strict

- If your phone helps you unwind, that's OK.
- Try night mode, lower brightness and calmer content.
- Set a "last scroll" alarm, and charge your phone out of reach.

8 Be kind to yourself

- Rest still counts, even when sleep doesn't come.
- Pressure to sleep keeps us awake, so aim for rest, not perfection.
- One hard night doesn't undo your progress.

Talk to your GP if...

you snore loudly or stop breathing in your sleep, have restless legs, struggle to sleep most nights for three months or more, feel so sleepy it affects driving or safety, or feel low. Questions about medication or HRT go to your prescriber or GP.