

Work worries keeping you awake? Here's what to do

Are you tossing and turning each night, stressing about your job or career? You're not alone.

The world of work has changed dramatically since COVID-19 began, and for some this has been keeping us awake worrying about work.

You shouldn't have to put up with poor sleep, and thankfully there are simple strategies that can help you to ease your anxiety and get better rest.

Here's what to try.

Why do career worries surface at bedtime?

Despite the fantasy of falling asleep as soon as your head hits the pillow, for many of us, our thoughts begin to whirr once we climb into bed. "So much of our stress and anxiety comes to the fore when we go to bed," says SEEK's Resident Psychologist Sabina Read.

"The main business of the day has slowed down and suddenly we've created space where we're not talking, doing or rushing. It's the perfect time for thoughts that have been present but ignored or avoided during the day to rise to the surface."

The best remedy for work worries

Sleep is vital to for our wellbeing. "Sleep really is the most important self-care tool," Read says. "It helps us repair, restore and re-energise our body and brain. If you're not sleeping, you're likely to be impacted by poor memory, mood changes and your immune system may take a hit."

But knowing how important sleep is can make some of us feel even more stressed, especially when we're not getting enough. "Rather than focusing on the impact of not getting good quality sleep, you can put systems in place to help improve sleep habits," Read says.

Rituals that can help you switch off work stress

"There are lots of simple strategies to help clear your mind of work worries before bed," Read says. Here are three to try:

1. **Make time for your worries**

"It's really useful to compartmentalise your concerns," Read says. "Set aside time every day – as long as it's not in the two hours before bedtime – to write down all your fears, concerns and worries. Once you've dumped your worries, make a pact that you won't give those worries any of your attention until the same time the next day."

2. Plug in

[Music can be a powerful way](#) to reduce career anxiety and SEEK has partnered with Sabina Read, leading music researcher Professor Bill Thompson, Director of Macquarie University's Music, Sound and Performance Lab, and prominent rapper Briggs to develop [SEEK Sleepmix](#) – a personalised Spotify playlist of music and career advice to help you relax and unwind.

3. Set your body clock

Having a set bedtime and time to get up helps your body maintain healthy sleep patterns. "Avoid screens or too much light in the hour before you go to bed," Read says. "This can send your body a message that it's day time and it can delay your sleep cycle."

What to do if you can't sleep

If you've been trying to get to sleep for more than 30 minutes, Read suggests getting up. "We tend to lie in bed thinking the same thoughts about work, when it's better to teach our brain the bed is not the place for those thoughts," she says. "Get out of bed, go into a dark, quiet room and sit with your thoughts or just focus on your breathing."

Read recommends not getting anything to eat or looking at your phone, but sitting until you get tired and bored. While you may worry about not sleeping, Read suggests saying a simple mantra like: "I'm not sleeping yet, but I'm giving my body time to rest and rejuvenate."

Many people have been impacted by COVID-19 and worries about the future are common, but you don't have to handle them alone. If you're finding things tough at the moment, there's support available to help you. The [Mental Health Foundation](#) has a range of information especially for the pandemic as well as [numbers you can call](#), and the [Ministry of Health](#) has tools and resources that relate to COVID-19 and more.

Read more:

- [3 signs you're at risk of burnout and what to do next](#)
- [What to do if you're worried about losing your job](#)
- [3 questions to ask family and friends if you're feeling stuck](#)