

# Sleep Well Techniques

[www.sleepwellclinic.co.nz](http://www.sleepwellclinic.co.nz)



Bevan Smith was there and relates some of the points made by Dr Bartle:

1. Avoid clock watching – position your alarm clock so you can't see it and out of reach. This is so that we don't register the times we are awake which raises our anxiety levels. He stressed this several times!
2. We all wake 4-5 times a night but mostly we don't realize this – this is normal. If we do become aware of waking in the night, try not to worry about it, roll over and drift back to sleep.
3. Preparing to sleep is important for people who struggle to get to sleep.
  - a. Don't exercise 3 hours before sleep (sex is okay!!) as sleep relates to a drop in body temperature and it takes longer for the temperature to drop after exercise. Exercise morning or late afternoon
  - b. Start dimming the lights in the hour before going to bed and avoid computer screens as this has a blue light base. Light reading (i.e., Not that page turning novel) or listening to music is good.
  - c. Avoid alcohol, smoking and caffeine through tea, coffee energy drinks and chocolate. Caffeine has a 5–8-hour half-life which can stimulate you as you try to get to sleep or cause a lighter sleep.
4. Getting to sleep is a major issue for people with insomnia. If you can't get to sleep:
  - a. After 15-20 minutes (roughly, as you can't see your clock ☺) get up for 15 minutes and read something light in a dim environment and repeat this cycle if necessary. Staying in bed unable to sleep raises anxiety and can make us mad.
  - b. Go to bed when sleepy. There is no use going to bed at 10 when you don't go to sleep until 12. If you usually go to sleep around 12 then go to bed at that time.
  - c. Avoid napping in the evening hours before you go to bed.
  - d. Writing things down in the relaxation hour before bed can help to distress and record things you need to remember to do the next day. This helps to avoid worrying that you will forget important things in the morning.
5. Noise – an issue for people who live rurally is that everything is so quiet. This can cause any small noise to waken you. Having some sort of background noise can help this as the brain tunes it out and other small noises are less apparent. Something like a radio station off channel, a fan or air-conditioning unit can help. The optimal room temperature is around 16-18 degrees.
6. Plenty of sunlight through the day is very helpful which is easy for orchardist in the BOP! Dr Bartle talked about a lot of the science around this.
7. During frost protection season when many are sleep deprived you can recover a lot if you take a small amount of time during the day to nap. A 20-minute nap revitalises a lot whereas much longer than this causes a deeper sleep level that takes half an hour or so of recovery feeling very groggy. So, one or two 20-minute naps could make a huge difference to your day.
8. Sleep Apnoea affects more people than we realize and there are solutions that require more specialist help. This is where the air way gets blocked by the back of the tongue and causes breathing to stop and regular waking (often without realizing). This inhibits getting to the deep sleep stage that is vital for body and mind replenishment. Sleeping on your back is the worst thing for this.