



SLEEP FOR WELLBEING

This strategy is suggested in the 14-16 BrainWaves lesson: **Managing stress** and **Building good sleep habits**

About the strategy

Sleep is a foundational physiological process essential for cognitive function, emotional regulation, and stress recovery. During adolescence, teenagers undergo a biological delayed sleep phase shift—pubertal hormones alter their circadian rhythm, naturally pushing bedtimes and wake times approximately one to two hours later. When teenagers do not receive the recommended **8 to 10 hours** of nightly sleep, their capacity for neural recovery decreases, making them significantly more vulnerable to academic stress, mood volatility, and long-term mental health challenges.

The scientific evidence behind the strategy

This study outlines how “sleep is critical for maintaining optimal cognitive function, emotional stability, and overall behavioral performance. Adequate sleep is essential for attentional control, memory consolidation, executive function, and emotional regulation, while sleep deprivation impairs these processes, negatively affecting... academic success, and general wellbeing”:

- Hyndych, A., El-Abassi, R. and Mader, E.C. (2025) '*The role of sleep and the effects of sleep loss on cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes*', *Cureus*, 17(5),

This study concludes that “recent and emerging data indicate a key role for sleep in supporting cognitive function and mental wellbeing in adolescence”:

- Roberts, R.E. & Duong, H.T. (2014) '*The prospective association between sleep deprivation and depression among adolescents*', *Sleep*, 37(2), pp. 239–244

The BrainWaves Cohort Study 2024 also shows that sleep (and exercise) are strong predictors of general wellbeing and lower levels of anxiety and depression:

- Parsons, R. et al (2025). *The BrainWaves study of adolescent wellbeing and mental health: Methods development and pilot data. PLoS ONE*, 20(12),

Further reading

This article discusses the biological mechanisms behind teenage sleep patterns and offers evidence-based tips for supporting healthy sleep hygiene:

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/news/teen-sleep-and-mental-health/>

You can also watch this BrainWaves webinar on ‘Teenagers and sleep’ with world-renowned sleep expert Professor Russell Foster from the University of Oxford:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7tfzROyNiE&feature=youtu.be>