

BE WELL

How to Create a Cozy Sleep Sanctuary

By Debbie DeAngelo
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Editor's note: Following is the latest article by Jefferson health and wellness expert Debbie DeAngelo.

When you walk into your bedroom, do you feel a sense of peace and calm or disorder and chaos?

The room in which you spend one third of your life should feel like a sanctuary. Your bedroom environment plays a key role in unwinding and getting a good night's slumber. The changes you make don't need to be costly or complex. Try these simple ways to transform your boudoir into a serene retreat, so you can awaken refreshed each day.

Clear the clutter. Piles of papers and books? Stacks of unfolded laundry? Unused treadmill with clothes hanging from it in the corner? Clear it out and clean it up. Not only does too much stuff feel confining, but it carries with it a reminder of all the things you have to do ... such as putting the clothes away and getting back to exercising on the treadmill. Relaxation will be hard won with those thoughts running through your mind. Decide what you really need and what you don't. Remove any unnecessary furniture and décor and keep your haven clean.

Cool it down. The room temperature range for an ideal night's sleep is 60 to 67 degrees. This augments the lowering of your body temperature that naturally occurs in the evening as your body winds down and prepares for rest. If your body temperature remains elevated because you have too many heavy blankets on, your pajamas are too warm or the room temperature is too high, then you may be restless, and the quality of your sleep may be poor. Using a fan can also provide the much-needed ventilation to prevent that stuffy feel.

Dim the lights. Too much light exposure in the evening, whether from natural or artificial light, will impair your body's melatonin regulation. Melatonin is a hormone produced in the pineal gland of the brain, which increases at night to induce sleepiness and decreases in the morning to trigger waking. Turn the lights down in the house in the evening and use night lights or low wattage lights to illuminate hallways and bathrooms, so if you get up in the middle of the night,

you don't need to flip on the overhead lights. Pay attention to streetlights that may be permeating your bedroom and use effective light-blocking shades. The same pertains to electronics. Many people turn to their cell phone while in bed for a relaxing scroll and troll through social media. This can actually backfire by cutting into your sleep time and short-circuiting melatonin. As for television ... your brain perceives the light and sound even when you're asleep. Refrain from placing a television in the bedroom or use the timer function, so it doesn't remain on all night.

Perform a bed check. If you crawl out of bed with more aches and pains than when you crawled in, evaluate the state of your mattress and pillow. This is especially true if you sleep better in a hotel or at a friend's house. Is your mattress showing signs of aging? A quality mattress typically lasts eight to 10 years. However, if it sags and loses its support, it may be time for a new one. Also consider if the bed is roomy enough for the people occupying it. You need to move around easily. What about your pillow? Is it the appropriate one for your sleep position and does it keep your neck in alignment? Once these aspects have been addressed, don't overlook your bedding. The fabrics you choose should be inviting, comfortable, and not trigger overheating. If you run warm, try materials like linen, bamboo, or silk.

Use your senses. Much of the relaxation that you're trying to create can be achieved through engaging your sense of sight, smell, and sound. Use a soothing color palette such as lavender, gray, blue, green, or cream. Paint color, bedding, or area rugs are effective ways of capturing this calm vibe. Vanilla, lavender, and jasmine are scents that have been shown to induce a sense of calm. Welcome the power of aromatherapy by using a diffuser or spritzing it on your pillowcase. As for noise, embrace the sound of silence. For some people, this may require wearing ear plugs, which is also helpful if your bedmate snores.

Preparing for a better night's rest begins with the design of your bedroom. Strive for a place where you can shut off the world and relax. Sweet Dreams!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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