

THE
13
LIFE HACKS



Hack 8
A Good Night's Sleep:
Teacher Notes

A project of



Government Criteria Alignment Chart

Framework	Criterion / Theme	Covered in Hack 8
PSHE (Health & Wellbeing)	H1: Recognise and talk about emotions	Links between tiredness, irritability, stress, and emotional regulation
	H2: Positive habits for physical health	Establishing sleep hygiene (routines, consistent wake/wind-down times)
	H4: Developing resilience and perseverance	Practising healthy sleep routines consistently, resisting distractions
	H5: Skills to manage setbacks and change	Handling “Can’t Sleep” nights (anxiety, intrusive thoughts, overthinking)
	H10: Strategies to manage pressure	Relaxation techniques, not forcing sleep, calming wind-down activities
PSHE (Relationships)	H11: Self-respect and achievement	Understanding sleep’s role in success at school, self-control, and wellbeing
	R2: Trust, respect, communication	Recognising how sleep deprivation affects interactions (snappiness, mood)
RSHE (Mental Wellbeing)	R13: Managing change in relationships	Balancing social demands (friends online late at night) with personal health
	MW1: Importance of routines for wellbeing	Bedtime routines, consistency, screen-free time
	MW3: Impact of lifestyle on mental health	Direct teaching: poor sleep increases stress, low mood, poor focus
PSHE (Health & Wellbeing)	MW5: Recognising when to seek help	Guidance that ongoing insomnia or distressing night thoughts should be shared with an adult

Government Criteria Alignment Chart

Framework	Criterion / Theme	Covered in Hack 8
Safeguarding / KCSIE	Recognising signs of distress	Identifying anxiety, overthinking, or intrusive thoughts as barriers to sleep
	Knowing how to seek support	Encouragement to talk to trusted adults when sleep problems persist
British Values	Individual Liberty	Taking responsibility for health and routines by making personal sleep plans
	Mutual Respect	Awareness that sleep-deprived behaviour affects family/friends (snapping, irritability)
SMSC – Spiritual	Self-awareness	Reflecting on personal sleep patterns and emotional impact
SMSC – Moral	Responsible decision-making	Choosing long-term health over short-term gratification (screens, late nights)
SMSC – Social	Responsibility to others	Recognising how sleep affects relationships and group harmony
SMSC – Cultural	Respecting differences	Awareness of different family rules and cultural expectations about sleep routines

Learning Focus

This chapter helps students understand why sleep is vital for health, learning, and emotional balance. It explores the difference between “Don’t Sleep” (choices and distractions) and “Can’t Sleep” (stress, worry, and discomfort). Students are guided through practical strategies for building better sleep habits, such as creating routines, limiting screens, and winding down. The chapter empowers students to design their own personalised sleep action plan, making small, achievable changes that improve mood, concentration, and relationships.

Key Themes

- There are two main types of sleep struggles: *Don’t Sleep* (choice, habits) and *Can’t Sleep* (anxiety, racing thoughts)
- Excuses and avoidance often keep teens awake longer than they realise
- Poor sleep has serious consequences for mood, focus, energy, and health
- Good sleep boosts memory, learning, resilience, and emotional balance
- Putting pressure on yourself to fall asleep usually backfires
- “Don’t Sleep” strategies: routines, screen limits, wind-down habits
- “Can’t Sleep” strategies: calming thoughts, pressure-free reframes, relaxation techniques
- Everyone needs to experiment and build a personal sleep plan that works for them
- Consistent, healthy sleep is a foundation for wellbeing and success

Discussion Prompts

1. Don’t Sleep (Choice & Habits)

- “What’s the difference between ‘Don’t Sleep’ and ‘Can’t Sleep?’”
- “Why do you think teens often stay up later than they should?”
- “What happens the next day when you don’t get enough sleep?”

2. Excuses & Procrastination

- “What’s the most common excuse you or your friends use to stay up late?”
- “Why do excuses feel harder to resist at night?”
- “How could you turn an excuse into a funny ‘excuse buster?’”

3. Healthy Sleep Habits

- “What small habits help you switch off before bed?”
- “If you designed a 3-step bedtime routine, what would you include?”
- “Why do you think routines make it easier to get to bed on time?”

4. Can’t Sleep (Struggle & Anxiety)

- “What does it feel like when your body is tired but your mind won’t stop?”
- “Why might telling yourself ‘I must fall asleep now’ make it harder to sleep?”
- “What’s one way to calm racing thoughts at night?”

5. Pressure-Free Thinking

- “How could you reframe the thought ‘Tomorrow will be ruined if I don’t sleep?’”
- “Why is it okay to rest even if you’re not asleep right away?”
- “What’s a kinder way you could talk to yourself on a restless night?”

6. Reflection & Motivation

- “If you slept one hour more each night, how would it change your day?”
- “What’s one change you’d like to try this week to improve your sleep?”
- “What’s a time when lack of sleep really affected you — and what did you learn from it?”

Imaginative Group Tasks

1. Don't vs. Can't Sleep Sort

How it works:

Each group is given a pile of scenario cards eg. “*Stayed up on the phone until 2am*”, “*Couldn't switch off racing thoughts*”.

{See Appendix A for scenario cards.}

Groups sort them into **Don't Sleep** and **Can't Sleep** piles, then share their answers with the class.

Extension: Each group suggests **one strategy** that might help for one card from each pile.

Why it works:

Helps students quickly “get” the two different sleep problems in a fun, visual way.

2. Excuse Busters Challenge

How it works:

Each group gets a list of classic “Don't Sleep” excuses (“*I'm not tired*”, “*I'll just do one more level*”).

{See Appendix B for a list of excuses.}

Their task is to create the funniest or sharpest **Excuse Buster comeback** for each excuse. Then groups present, and the class votes for the best ones.

Why it works:

Turns procrastination into a joke, helps students recognise excuses in real life, and arms them with snappy counters.

3. Sleep Switch Routine Race

How it works:

Each group designs a **3-step “Sleep Switch Routine”** for a teen who wants to get to bed earlier.

{See Appendix C for some routine examples.}

They write their steps on a mini-poster (e.g. “*Phone in a basket – Warm shower – Gratitude list*”).

Each group presents their routine in 30 seconds, and the teacher puts all routines up on the wall as a “Class Menu of Sleep Ideas.”

Why it works:

Gives practical, peer-sourced strategies in a creative, fast-paced group format.

Imaginative Group Tasks

4. Pressure-Free Thought Reframe

How it works:

Teacher reads out anxious sleep thoughts (“*I must fall asleep now*”, “*If I don’t sleep, tomorrow will be ruined*”).

{See Appendix D for some anxious sleep thoughts.}

Each group rewrites the thought into a **calmer version**, then shares with the class.

E.g. “*It’s okay to rest even if I don’t sleep straight away.*”

Why it works:

Groups practice calming pressure thoughts together - a collective brainstorm that normalises “Can’t Sleep” struggles.

5. Bedtime Battles Play

How it works:

Each group creates a short skit:

- One student plays a teen who wants to stay up.
- Another plays their “future self” explaining the costs of bad sleep.
The group works together to script and act it out.
Class votes on the most creative or funniest “future self” argument.

Why it works:

Brings humour, energy, and real-life consequences into the classroom.

6. The Sleep Experiment Pitch

How it works:

Each group chooses **one change** (from the chapter or their own ideas) that could improve sleep for teens.

They then design a **1-minute “pitch”** to the class explaining why this idea is worth trying and what benefits it could bring.

Bonus: Teacher writes the top ideas on the board as a “Sleep Experiment Bank” for the whole class.

Why it works:

Turns healthy sleep habits into a group brainstorming challenge, with peer ownership and creativity.

Torah Perspectives

Theme in Hack	Source	Hebrew & English (in same cell)	Use in Lesson
Wasting time by staying up late	Pirkei Avos 3:5	רבי חנינא בן חכיןאי אומר: הנעור בלילה... ומפנה לבו לבטלה – חייב בנפשו Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai says: One who stays awake at night... and turns his heart to idleness endangers his soul.	Shows how wasting the night leads to spiritual and personal loss.
Sleep benefits the body	Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 32:23	שינה מישרת מועלת לבריאות הגוף, מפני שהמאכל מתעכל והגוף נוח Balanced sleep benefits the body's health because it allows digestion and rest.	Connects good sleep with physical wellbeing.
Guard your health	Devarim 4:15 / Berachos 32b	ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם – Be very protective of your lives.	Emphasises that caring for sleep is part of the mitzvah of looking after your body.
Sleep supports self-kindness	Mishlei 11:17	גומל נפשו איש חסד – A kindly man benefits himself; a cruel man troubles his own flesh.	Caring for your own needs, like sleep, is a form of kindness to yourself.
Too much sleep is harmful	Pirkei Avos 3:14	רבי דוסא בן הרקינס אומר: שינת הבקר... מוציאה את האדם מן העולם Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas says: Morning sleep... removes a person from the world.	Teaches balance: not too little, not too much sleep.
Sleep as yetzer hara test	Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 1:4	צריך אדם להתחכם לנצח יצר הרע... אפלו אם יהיה קשה על ידי עצלות הגוף A person must outwit the evil impulse, even when laziness makes it hard to rise.	Encourages students to see getting up on time as a spiritual battle.
Chafetz Chaim on sleep	Chafetz Chaim al HaTorah, Va'eschanan	אפלו אם היצר הרע מעציד ללמוד יותר, אל תשמע לו – פונה לבטל אתך מלמוד Even if the yetzer hara tells you to study more at night, don't listen; his intention is to stop your learning.	Stresses that late-night learning at the cost of sleep harms Torah study long-term.
Daily routine builds strength	Ein Yaakov, Ben Pazi	תמיד של שחר – זה הפלל הגדול The daily morning Tamid teaches the power of consistent daily practice.	Shows the value of a healthy sleep routine for consistency in life.
New habits create angels	Shabbos 32a (Maharsha)	כל מצוה שאדם עושה, הקב"ה בורא לו מלאך Every mitzvah creates an angel; every bad act creates a prosecutor.	Frames going to bed on time as a small daily mitzvah that builds up over time.
Self-care first	Shabbos 133b	מה הוא רחום ותנון, אף אתה רחום ותנון Just as Hashem is compassionate, you too should be compassionate.	Applying compassion to oneself by resting properly.
Balance and beginnings are hard	Rashi, Shemos 19:5	כל התחלות קשות – All beginnings are difficult.	Reminds students that forming a healthy sleep pattern feels hard at first but gets easier.
Healthy thoughts affect sleep	Rabbeinu Bachya, Devarim 29:18	השמחה והעצב תלויים במחשבות – Happiness and sadness depend on thoughts.	Teaches that a calm mind before bed improves rest.
Think good, feel good	Tzemach Tzedek	טראכט גוט וזיין גוט – Think good and it will be good.	Promotes positive thinking before sleep to reduce worry.
Set aside reflection time	Likutei Moharan 2:24	טוב לקבוע זמן בכל יום להוציא לבו לפני ה'... ובשאר היום יהיה בשמחה It is good to set a time daily to pour out your heart to Hashem, and then be happy the rest of the day.	Encourages students to "download" worries before bed so they can sleep peacefully.

Suggested 3 lesson plan

Lesson 1: Don't Sleep – Choices, Excuses & Consequences

Learning Focus:

- Recognise the difference between “choosing not to sleep” and genuine sleep problems
- Explore the real-life impact of poor sleep on mood, learning, and wellbeing
- Identify the benefits of good sleep

Key Themes Covered:

- Many teens struggle with *not going to bed on time* rather than true insomnia
- Excuses fuel procrastination but can be challenged
- Poor sleep has real disadvantages the next day
- Good sleep boosts mood, focus, and energy

Discussion Prompts:

- What are the most common reasons teens stay up late?
- What happens the next day if you don't sleep enough?
- How does good sleep make a difference in your life?

Group Activities:

- Don't vs. Can't Sleep Sort (Appendix A)
- Excuse Busters Challenge (Appendix B)
- Mini-Activity: Sleep Consequences & Benefits Wall – groups brainstorm 3 disadvantages of poor sleep *and* 3 benefits of good sleep, teacher builds a class chart contrasting the two.

Workbook Pages:

pp. 49–52

Lesson 2: Can't Sleep – Thoughts and Pressure

Learning Focus:

- Explore how anxiety and racing thoughts keep us awake
- Practise reframing pressure-filled thoughts into calmer ones
- Discover routines that calm the body and mind before bed

Key Themes Covered:

- “Can't Sleep” = anxiety, pressure, or overthinking
- Pressure to sleep makes it harder to fall asleep
- Calming routines and thought reframes reduce night-time stress

Discussion Prompts:

- Why does telling yourself “I must sleep now” backfire?
- What kind of thoughts race through your head at night?
- What would help you feel calmer if you couldn't sleep?

Group Activity:

- Pressure-Free Thought Reframe (Appendix D – anxious thoughts list)
- Sleep Switch Routine Race (Appendix E – routine examples)

Workbook Pages:

pp. 82–86

Suggested 3 lesson plan

Lesson 3: Sleep Balance & Recap

Learning Focus:

- Consolidate “Don’t vs. Can’t” strategies into one toolkit
- Recognise balance: not too little, not too much sleep
- Apply personal learning to real-life routines

Key Themes Covered:

- Healthy sleep = balance of habits and mindset
- Both “don’t” and “can’t” problems can be tackled with strategies
- Small changes at night = big changes in daytime mood and energy

Discussion Prompts:

- Why is balance in sleep so important?
- What’s one change you could make to your own sleep routine?
- How would better sleep affect your mood, energy, or friendships?

Group Activity:

- Routine Showdown Game (Appendix F – bedtime habits challenge)
- Sleep Quiz (Appendix G – multiple-choice recap)

Extras (Lesson 3 add-ons):

- Word Search – sleep-related key words from the hack
- Multiple-Choice Quiz – recap of “don’t sleep” vs. “can’t sleep,” thought reframes, and routines
- Reflection Task – “One small change I will try this week to improve my sleep is...”

Workbook Pages:

pp. 87–90

Appendix A

Scenario Cards

DON'T Sleep examples (choices/avoidance):

- Stayed up on the phone until 2am
- Playing “one more level” on a game
- Stayed chatting in a group chat for hours
- Messaging friends until late
- Lying around all day, so not feeling sleepy at night
- Chose to do homework late instead of earlier in the evening
- Decided to nap for two hours after school
-

CAN'T Sleep examples (struggles beyond choice):

- Couldn't switch off racing thoughts
- Felt anxious about a test the next day
- Couldn't stop worrying after an argument with a friend
- Lay awake because of scary thoughts
- Couldn't relax after too much caffeine or energy drinks
- Found it hard to sleep because of noise at home
- Woke up in the night and couldn't fall back asleep
- Tossed and turned because of feeling restless

Appendix B

Classic “Don't Sleep” Excuses

- *“I'm not even tired yet.”*
- *“I'll just play a bit more”*
- *“I'll do my homework later, it won't take long.”*
- *“Everyone else is still awake, I don't want to miss out.”*
- *“I'll just play one more level, then I'll sleep.”*
- *“I can't sleep without checking my phone one last time.”*
- *“I'll get up early tomorrow instead.”*
- *“Five more minutes won't hurt.”*
- *“I need to sort out a few things now”*
- *“If I go to bed now, I'll just lie awake anyway.”*

Appendix C

Example Routines

Routine 1 – Digital Detox Wind-Down

- Put phone in a basket outside the bedroom.
- 10 minutes of light stretching or deep breathing.
- Read a book (not on a screen) for 15 minutes.

Routine 2 – Calm & Cozy

- Warm shower to relax the body.
- Dim the lights and play soft background music.
- Write down 3 good things from the day in a gratitude journal.

Routine 3 – Mind Reset

- Set alarm for tomorrow + place phone far from bed.
- Write down any racing thoughts or “to-dos” on paper.
- Quick relaxation exercise (e.g. square breathing).

Routine 4 – “Sleep Mode” Ritual

- Drink a warm caffeine-free drink (herbal tea, warm milk).
- Put on comfy sleep clothes and brush teeth.
- Do 5 minutes of guided imagery (e.g. imagining a calm beach).

Appendix D

Anxious Sleep Thoughts

- *“I must fall asleep right now.”*
- *“If I don’t sleep, tomorrow will be a disaster.”*
- *“I’ll never be able to concentrate in school if I don’t sleep.”*
- *“Why can’t I sleep like everyone else?”*
- *“I’m going to be exhausted forever.”*
- *“What if I just stay awake all night?”*
- *“I’ll fail my exam because I can’t sleep.”*
- *“Something must be wrong with me.”*
- *“If I don’t sleep soon, I’ll get sick.”*
- *“I’ll be embarrassed tomorrow if people notice I’m tired.”*