

Sweet Dreams are Made of These

By: **Trisha M. Tinney, MS, CHES**
UNCW Health Educator

The beginning of the academic year is always exciting: new classes, new people to meet, and a new schedule to follow. Unfortunately, getting back into the swing of things can be a little challenging for some UNCW students, especially when it comes to getting enough shut eye! According to the 2013 UNCW College Health Assessment, 34% of UNCW students report that their lack of sleep has negatively affected their academics and 51% report feeling tired, dragged out or sleepy on most days of the week. Fortunately, there are multiple steps your son or daughter can take to lead a healthy and well rested life!

1. **Break out the ear plugs:** Although the residence halls and apartment buildings are great locations to live and meet people, it can be a bit difficult getting the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep a night. Ear plugs can help drown out music, talking, and television, but won't allow your student to miss their morning alarm. Let your student know to stop by Health Promotion in the Student Rec Center 104 for free ear plugs!
2. **Utilize a sleep mask:** Oftentimes lights from the TV, a charging cell phone or computer, or even a ill-placed street light may be keeping your son or daughter awake at night. A sleep mask will help block out light that is keeping them awake.
3. **Purchase a white noise machine:** A white noise machine or even a desk fan works wonders at blocking out sleep disrupting noises. They are affordable and worth every penny – especially if they aid in a good night's rest!
4. **Power down:** It can be very difficult to shut that cell phone or laptop off but it is critical in helping one fall asleep. The bright light from our electronics stimulates us and can keep us wide awake. Remind your student that Facebook, Pinterest, and text messages will be there in the morning!
5. **Find a balance:** Although it's challenging, maintaining a sleep and wake schedule seven days a week is important. It isn't helpful to "catch up" on sleep over the weekend, only to not get enough during the week. Encourage your student to set a nightly routine to ensure 7-9 hours of sleep.
6. **Exercise regularly:** Regular exercise can help one get a better sleep at night. However, it is best to complete exercise at least 2-3 hours before bed to give your body time to cool down.
7. **Avoid napping:** Naps can interfere with sleep at night. If your student does nap, encourage them to keep it brief (15-30 minutes) and earlier in the day. A nap is intended to "recharge" us and give us enough energy to get us through the day, but allow us to still go to sleep at our regular time.
8. **Keep a comfortable temperature:** Keeping one's bedroom between 65-72 degrees can help your Seahawk stay sound asleep. Cooler temperatures keep our bodies more relaxed and comfortable in our covers versus getting to warm and sweating.
9. **Stretch:** Stretching, Pilates or doing yoga can put one's mind at ease, relax muscles & steady breath.
10. **Stress Management:** Oftentimes, your student may have a difficult time sleeping because there is too much on their mind. Whether it's coursework, finances, relationship concerns, etc., life stress can have a major impact on our ability to get a good night's sleep. The resources listed below are extremely helpful in getting your student on track with their stress/sleep management.

For more information on healthy sleep practices, encourage your student to check out Health Promotion's Sleep Management Week, September 22-26. Events and programs for this week can be found on the online calendar at www.uncw.edu/healthpromo. Additional on-campus resources include:

Health Promotion
Student Rec Center 104
910-962-4135

Abrons Student Health Center
DePaolo Hall, 2nd Floor
910-962-3280

UNCW Counseling Center
DePaolo Hall, 2nd Floor
910-962-3746