TEMPLATE ARTICLE FOR INTRANET

**Putting sleep first in 2019**

**Are you feeling fresh, rested and ready to tackle 2019? This month at [insert organisation] we are focusing on getting better sleep and lifting on the lid on Good Thinking – our new online wellbeing tool. It can help you find some of the best resources to get a better night’s sleep, and overcome problems like stress, anxiety and feeling low so you can set yourself up for your best year yet.**

**Why Put Sleep First?**

New Year; new start. Every year we set out with the best intentions to optimize our lives: daily gym sessions, drinking more water, swapping chocolate for edamame, learning a language, climbing Everest. No matter what the scale of your ambitions, if you kept your New Year’s resolutions in 2018, you’re unusual.

It’s very difficult to change our entrenched habits. We only have limited reserves of self-control. We tend to revert to routine behaviours because our capacity to self-regulate is like a muscle and it tires easily. A long day at the office can be enough for us to return to auto-pilot – we reach for the TV remote before we’ve even set eyes on that ‘Must do’ list on the fridge.

So, when you’re thinking about goals for 2019, is there a shortcut to success? Rather than trying to squeeze more into every day, why not put sleep first for a change?

**Top three reasons to put sleep first in 2019:**

* **Self-control:** When you’re sleep deprived, the brain enters survival mode: we dial up activity in the emotional fear centres, making us feel more anxious and sensitive to threats. At the same time, we downgrade activity in the parts of the brain responsible for less urgent activities like planning, and self-control. This is why it’s much harder to stick to your goals when you’re short of sleep.
* **Appetite:** When we cut sleep short, we throw our internal body clocks into disarray. We produce more of the hormone, grehlin, which makes us hungry, and less leptin, which makes us feel full. So we get more of the munchies after a bad night’s sleep, and we’re less likely to resist our cravings.
* **Memory:** If you can’t even remember your 2018 resolutions, perhaps you didn’t get enough sleep last year. Overnight we consolidate new memories; putting the most important into long-term storage and pruning the unnecessary. Long-term sleep deprivation has been implicated as a risk factor for dementia.

So, if you’re sold on the idea of shifting sleep up your priority list, how do you go about it?

1. **Start a sleep diary:** Step 1 is to take stock of the status quo. For 7 days, write down when you go to sleep, wake up, and how energised you feel during the day. Most adults need at least 7 hours sleep to function at their best, but your sleep need is unique to you.
2. **Prepare for sleep:** An hour before bed, start to unwind and detach from the day. Leave tech out of the bedroom – it interferes with melatonin, your body’s signal for sleep. A daily ritual of relaxation will help with readiness for sleep.
3. **Learn the tricks of the trade:** To transform your sleep habits for the better, and ease the racing mind, try Sleepio. Sleepio is an online programme that teaches you tools and techniques to take control of your sleep. It’s free for Londoners via Good Thinking, sign up online at www.good-thinking.uk/sleepio

Let’s make 2019 our best yet by each taking better care of ourselves from the very start! Visit Good Thinking [www.good-thinking.uk](http://www.good-thinking.uk) and try out the sleep quiz to see the types of tools that can help you.