

# 9 Tips If You & Your Partner Go To Sleep At Different Times

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Everything may be seemingly perfect in your relationship with your significant other except for one thing: You go to bed late and they go to bed early – or vice-versa – so where’s the happy medium? Whether you and your partner have different bed times due to work schedules or insomnia, experts say there *are* ways to still stay connected with your partner, even if your sleep schedules are making you seem disconnected.

According to a recent study of 1,010 people in relationships aged 18 to 75 by The Sleep Judge, going to bed before a significant other is pretty common. The survey found that nearly 58 percent of people admitted they fell asleep at different times than their partner. While almost 62 percent of Gen Xers said they fell asleep at a different time than their significant other, 56 percent of millennials said the same thing.

If you’re curious as to why couples’ bedtimes vary, The Sleep Judge study looked into that, too. While some people said that either they or their partner takes longer to fall asleep than the other, some cited different work schedules or the fact that their partner uses their phone, computer, or tablet in bed.

“Some people are morning types, and some are night owls,” Dr. Benjamin Smarr, National Institutes of Health postdoctoral fellow at UC Berkeley and Reverie sleep advisory board member, tells Bustle. So how can they sleep in the same bed on such different schedules?” He says that although this is a tricky situation, the best solution is if the couple agrees on some basic things in order to maximize the awake time they have together.

Below, experts weigh in on how to stay connected to your partner even if you two go to sleep at different times.

## 1 Go Into Bed With Your Partner Until They Fall Asleep

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*Ashley Batz/Bustle*

OK, so you can’t help but be a night owl while your partner is not. However, that doesn’t mean you can’t get into bed with them for a while, then go do your own thing till it’s your bedtime.

“If it is not possible to go to bed at the same time, you can still both get into bed together for a period of time – to cuddle, talk, and/or engage in sexual activity,” Dr. Rachel Needle, licensed psychologist and certified sex therapist in West Palm Beach, FL, and the co-director of Modern Sex Therapy Institutes, tells Bustle. “Then, the partner who is going to stay up can get out of bed after you have had some time to connect.”

## 2 Try Nights Together And Nights Apart

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*Andrew Zaeh for Bustle*

Every couple is different: Some live together while others only have sleepovers a few times a week and, during those sleepovers, perhaps you fall asleep at different times. Or, maybe you sleep in separate rooms since one person snores or unintentionally keeps the other awake.

That said, even if you and your significant other go to bed at different times, Dr. Smarr says that a good compromise is to sometimes go to bed at the \*same\* time. "If there's an inconsistency with sleep schedules, you can work out schedules of nights together and nights apart to allow proper rest and recharge," he says.

Dr. Needle, too, suggests compromising and sometimes going to bed at the same time. "This often leads to connection and more sexual activity," she says. "Though going to sleep at the same time is often not possible, make a conscious effort to at least three nights a week."

## 3 Try Shifting Your Sleep Schedule

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*Ashley Batz/Bustle*

For some people, being a morning person or a night owl seems to be in their DNA. But if not, Natalie Dautovich, PhD, assistant professor of Counseling Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University and environmental fellow at National Sleep Foundation, has a solution.

"If it's a matter of preference not work hours, consider shifting your sleep schedule to create better alignment," she tells Bustle. "For instance, bright light exposure first thing in the morning (i.e., by going outside) can help to advance a sleep schedule (moving it earlier). Conversely, bright light in the evening will have the opposite effect, resulting in a delayed sleep schedule (moving it later)."

## 4 Find Other Ways To Connect

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*Andrew Zaeh for Bustle*

*Outside* of the bedroom and sleep hours, find other ways to connect with your partner, Dr. Needle says. "Be sure to schedule undistracted time together to connect, and make sure you are not distracted with technology: Just focus on each other," she says. "Scheduling time off from work and vacations together is also a good idea."

Elizabeth Hankin, licensed marriage and family therapist at Whole Health Psychological Center, agrees. "If you and your partner don't get to see each other often due to differing work schedules, learn how to connect and communicate with each other in other ways," she tells Bustle. "Some of these ways include writing each other letters or Post-it notes to surprise the person, or setting aside time to FaceTime or Skype."

Dr. Dautovich also suggests prioritizing time that overlaps, even if it means scheduling some activities outside of typical timing. “For example, you and your partner can have an early dinner or meet for a late breakfast,” she says.

## 5 Communicate And Be Respectful Of Your Partner

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*Ashley Batz/Bustle*

Perhaps you go to bed an hour or two before your partner and you’ve gotten used to them accidentally waking you up right when you were finally getting into a deep sleep. However, any sleep interruption is not good for consistent sleep, so that’s where communication and respect come in. “Respect the sleep environment of your partner by trying to minimize light exposure and noise,” Dr. Dautovich says.

Dr. Smarr agrees. “Most of us believe we are ‘ninjas’ when sneaking in or out of bed, but we’re probably not, so a reality check can be helpful,” he says. “It’s not so much the sleep interruption itself that’s upsetting, but when sleep is interrupted, emotions are a little less tempered,” he says. “So, if the interruption feels thoughtless or adds to a pile of discontent that maybe we don’t talk about when we’re awake, then it can become the straw that breaks the camel’s back.”

He says using your sleep differences as an opportunity to practice communicative resolution and understanding of the other person’s position. “It’s important for you and your partner to discuss the issues at hand and come to an agreement that works for both of your individual sleep routines.”

## 6 Assess Bedroom Sleep Logistics

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*Ashley Batz/Bustle*

Logistics may also play a part in you or your partner’s sleeping patterns. “A better sleep environment will help to promote better sleep, regardless of when you go to sleep,” Dr. Dautovich says. “For instance, maintain a cool bedroom temperature.”

Dr. Sujay Kansagra, Mattress Firm’s sleep health expert, agrees. “In order to offset one another’s body heat, keep your room cool – 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit is recommended,” he tells Bustle.

He also says that, in addition to earplugs, if your partner snores like a freight train and keeps you from a sound night’s sleep, an adjustable base may be what you both need versus something like stacking pillows to raise your bed. “A slight elevation to your partner’s neck, made possible by the adjustable base, can open the airways, alleviating snoring in your partner and giving you silence,” he says.

A final thing to evaluate is your mattress, says Dr. Kansagra. “A firmer mattress will also prevent the bed from moving with every toss and turn,” he says. “So if your partner’s motions disturb your sleep, maybe it’s time to find a new sleep surface.”

## 7 Seek Help For Sleep Issues

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*Ashley Batz/Bustle*

Maybe the reason you cannot go to bed when your partner does is because they snore, you snore, or there is some issue that keeps one of you awake, such as insomnia. Dr. Smarr says to make sure to seek out help for sleep issues.

While anxiety or a lack of exercise may cause someone to be a restless sleeper, he says, those are issues that can be addressed. "Similarly, sleep apnea or snoring can be worsened by allergies," he says. "Talking to your partner about these issues and the pros and cons of seeking a solution can be helpful to both of you," Dr. Smarr says. He also says to keep in mind that people don't often know if they snore, roll, or talk in their sleep, so it's important to go easy on them in the initial conversation.

Working with a sleep expert may also be necessary. "Whether you are waking up from pain, a snoring sleep partner, or other sleep-related problems, working with an informed sleep expert can help you find the perfect products to relieve any issues," Dr. Kansagra says. "This will provide you with a better night's sleep, especially if you and your partner have different sleep schedules."

## 8 Schedule Time For Sex

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*Andrew Zaeh for Bustle*

For some couples, having sex is the norm before going to sleep, but if you and your partner go to sleep at different times, this can throw a wrench in your sex life. But, that doesn't have to be — and shouldn't be — the case.

"Schedule time for sexual activity," Dr. Needle says. "Scheduled sex can be exciting! Spend time throughout the day leading up to your sexy time with your partner to build anticipation and excitement!"

Hankin also says that sexting can help. "If your schedules are impacting your sex lives, make things more exciting with risqué texts that get your partner thinking about the next time you will see each other," she says.

## 9 Be Realistic

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*Andrew Zaeh for Bustle*

Is not going to sleep when your partner does part of a bigger problem you two are having? Hankin says to be realistic. "If your schedules are impacting your time together, it's probably impacting other areas of your life, as well," she says. "Be aware of these effects and how long you can sustain them before you are unhappy. Then, discuss options with your partner regarding how you can change things."

Overall, Dr. Dautovich says to optimize the sleep that each person is getting — your

relationship could depend on it. “Good sleep health leads to better emotion regulation and less emotional reactivity which, in turn, can lead to fewer relationship conflicts,” she says.

Dr. Kansagra adds that everyone has their own idea of comfort, especially when it comes to sleep. “Finding a way to sleep in the same bed as another person can be difficult, but it doesn’t have to be,” he says. “Your bedroom is your sleep sanctuary, and you shouldn’t have to skimp on your sleep due to someone else.”

As you can see, there are plenty of ways to compromise with your partner when you two have different bedtimes. And, like Hankin says, you may also have to dig deeper and see if not going to sleep at the same time actually represents a bigger problem in the relationship, which is a whole other story altogether.