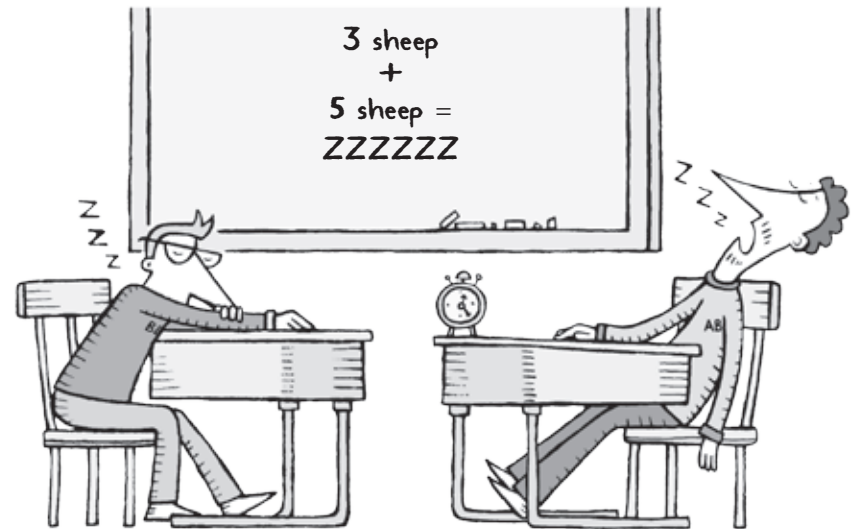


Wakey, wakey! Let's start this lesson with a question: what does everyone need to perform at their best, whether it's Harry Kane getting ready to play in a World Cup game, Alex playing dominoes with Pelé or Ben running with his dog in the park? No dozing at the back! The answer is: sleep.

Everyone needs a good night's sleep and in this lesson we are going to learn how to get the most out of our zzzzzs. Professional footballers have to play matches at all hours: at lunchtime, in the afternoon and even late at night. They need to be getting enough sleep to be alert no matter what time it is.

We're going to find out what tricks they use to get the best night's sleep before a big game. We'll also meet the man who tells Real Madrid's players what pyjamas to wear. And the animal that sleeps for only two hours every day.

Rise and shine!



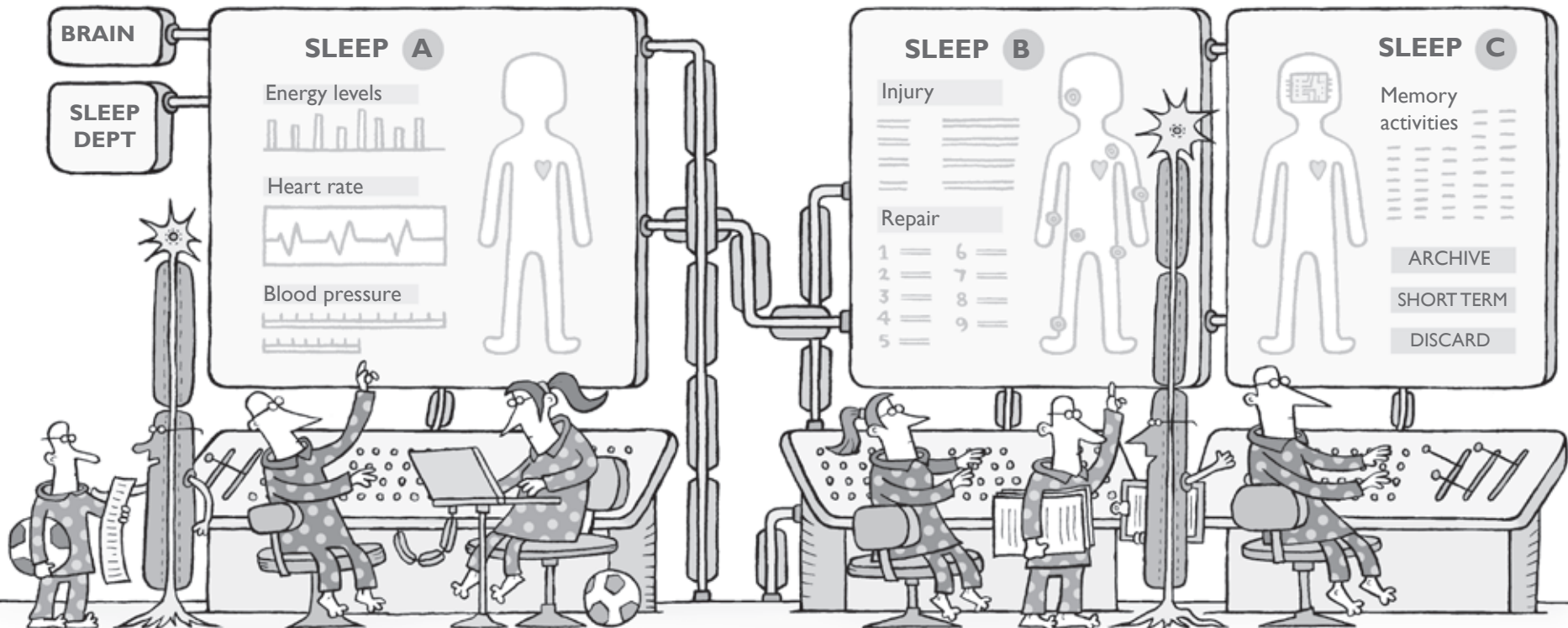
SLEEPY HEADS

When we go to sleep, we feel our mind slowly drifting off ... and off ... and off... Meanwhile, our body is getting to work. Because when you sleep, lots is happening.

- ⌋ The heart slows, blood pressure lowers, the body's temperature drops and the blood supply to the muscles increases. This helps restore our energy levels when we wake.
- ⌋ Chemicals are released to repair injured cells in the body. This helps the body protect itself against illness and recover from injury.
- ⌋ The brain lists all the things that have happened that day in the part that stores memories.

Sleep is our daily recovery and rejuvenation routine. Recently, scientists have discovered just how important sleep is, not only to our health but also to our happiness. They say that the right amount of sleep can help us live longer, be happier, more driven and creative and even more honest. Tell that to your parents when they try to wake you up!

Sleep can make a massive difference to sportspeople too. Footballers who sleep soundly have better reaction times and decision-making skills, and also recover more quickly from injury than those who toss and turn. Before we meet the man who teaches footballers how to sleep, let's learn about what happens when we are counting sheep... Baa-ck to bed!



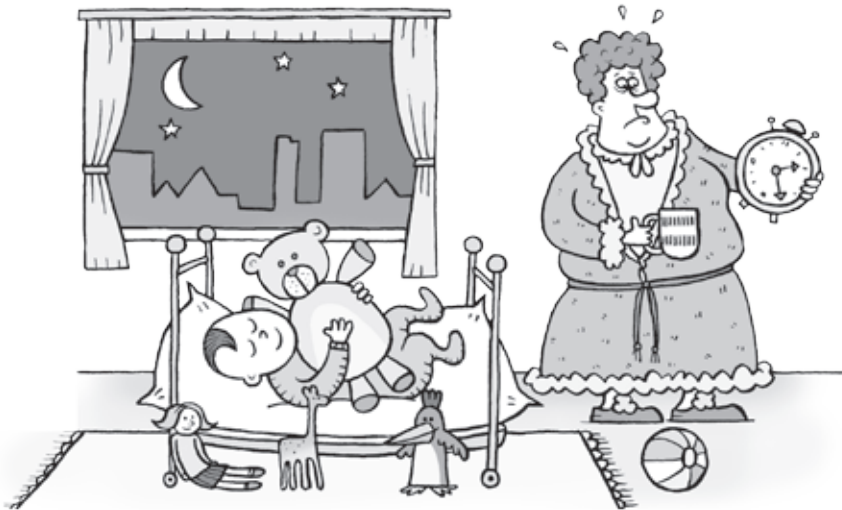
FIVE-A-NIGHT

When you're asleep, your body goes through a cycle of four different stages. Each stage serves a specific purpose, and each complete cycle lasts around 90 minutes – the same time as a football match!

You go through many **sleep cycles** in a night. Doctors say that four year olds need about twelve hours sleep a night, eight to twelve year olds need about ten hours and adults need about eight hours.

But it is not just about the number of hours, it is also about the quality of the sleep. **Deep sleep** is the most restorative sleep for your body, and the longer that period is, the better you will feel the next day. Babies spend a lot of time in deep sleep. But the older you become, the longer your **light sleep** cycle lasts. This might be why your grandparents complain of having a bad night's sleep.

So if you're a professional footballer, how do you get the most out of your zzzzzs?



SLEEP DIARY



Stage 1: TRANSITIONAL PHASE



About 5 minutes

The mind drops off. The eyes might roll. The muscles might jerk as you enter a light sleep.

FUNCTION: To prepare the body for sleep.

Stage 2: LIGHT SLEEP



About 45 minutes

The muscles relax, the mind rests and the heart-rate slows down. You can be easily woken from this stage.

FUNCTION: To repair damaged cells.

Stage 3: DEEP SLEEP



About 20 minutes

This is the most refreshing part of sleep. Breathing slows. The body is still. Sometimes your limbs will move, so this is when sleepwalking, talking in your sleep or bed-wetting can occur.

FUNCTION: This is the key stage for your body and mind to recover. The brain gets a reboot so it can learn afresh the next day. If you are a child, this is when your body grows.

Stage 4: REM (Rapid Eye Movement) SLEEP

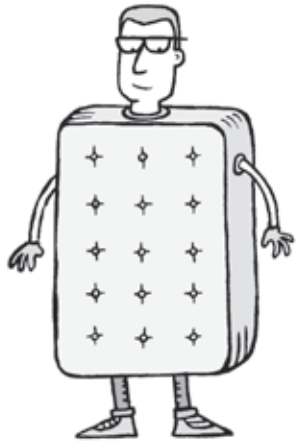


About 20 minutes

The brain is active and revitalized. The body is still apart from your eyelids, which flutter. The heart-rate and blood pressure increase. You dream. The length of this stage increases with each cycle, so longer dreams occur towards the end of sleep.

FUNCTION: To store memories, as the brain processes our emotional experiences.



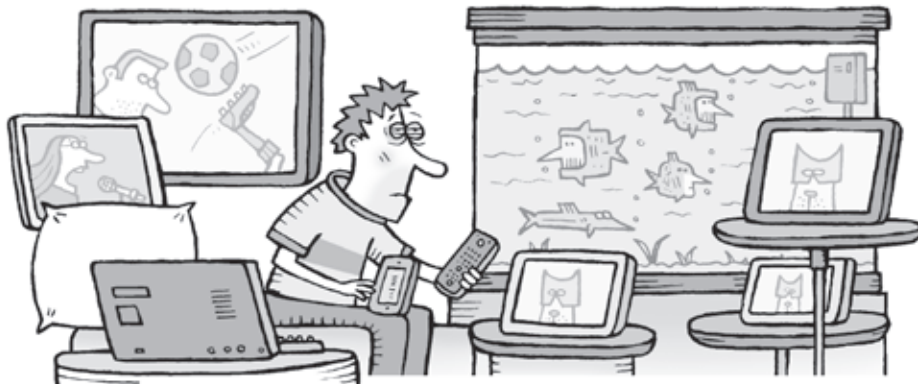


ASLEEP ON THE JOB

Nick Littlehales was working for a mattress company when he wrote to former Manchester United coach Sir Alex Ferguson, offering to help players recover from matches with sleep advice. Ferguson was keen to know more. Littlehales suggested that defender Gary Pallister, who was suffering from back problems, change his mattress. His advice also helped Ryan Giggs play for United even after he had turned 40.

That's how Littlehales started his new job as a sleep coach for the world's biggest football teams, including Chelsea, Real Madrid and the England national team.

Our body regulates its own feelings of sleepfulness and wakefulness according to natural light. When it is dark outside, we are more likely to want to sleep. When it's light, we want to be active. Littlehales visits each player's bedroom to make sure they have a good set of curtains and don't have too many distractions. One player he visited had four different flatscreen TVs on his bedroom wall, while another had a huge lit-up aquarium. Lights out!



TEACHING RONALDO TO SLEEP

When Littlehales was at Real Madrid, he knew that Cristiano Ronaldo was looking to improve all aspects of his performance, including his recovery and sleep. He gave tips to the players and coaches at Real Madrid and is proud that Ronaldo has adopted the principles of his advice. This is what he told European football's most successful club:

- ☾ Switch off all devices – such as laptops, smartphones and tablets – over an hour before you go to sleep. The blue light from these devices triggers brain waves, which makes it harder to go to sleep.
- ☾ Move from a warm, light area to a cooler, darker one. This recreates the everyday process of sunrise and sunset, as your brain slowly relaxes from hyper-awake mode.
- ☾ Avoid fatty or sugary foods in the evening as they take longer to digest. A balanced diet, which includes carbohydrates such as pasta, and protein such as chicken and nuts, will improve sleep quality.
- ☾ Sleep in the foetal position, which is curled up like a baby in their mother's stomach. This protects your vital organs. Lie on your non-dominant side. If you are right-handed, then lie on your left side: this position leaves your strong side free.

