

MY 'BLACK MIRROR' BEDTIME STORY

By Sydney Gore 01/31/18 at 04:06PM



As technology continues to advance, my stress levels seem to rise. Maybe I've been watching too much *Black Mirror*, but lately I've been feeling like we are too consumed by "smart" technology. There's literally an app for everything and most of the time they don't actually make me feel any smarter. But when I heard that a "smart" mattress existed from a company called [Eight](#), I was curious to try it out.

Unless I am physically and emotionally exhausted — which isn't healthy at all by the way — it takes me several hours to fall asleep. I often find myself lying awake, mind racing out of control for several hours. While the idea of having something keep track of literally everything that I'm doing when I'm not awake is somewhat invasive, this seemed like my best option to learn about my sleeping habits and find out what improvements could be made.

Eight's sleep tracker is essentially a sensor layer that has the ability to collect data to determine your sleep phases. It does this by monitoring your heart and respiratory rates, and controlling the temperature of your bed. All you have to do is slip the cover over your mattress. You can also access all of the data through the app at any time, which is very convenient. While it took me a few days of troubleshooting (and emailing back and forth with a support representative named Jonathan) to connect my WiFi to Eight, it was a smooth process once the sleep tracker finally synced up.



For the past week that I have been using the sleep tracker and Jupiter mattress, I have slept for an average of 7 hours and 28 minutes with 22% worth of deep sleep and achieved a sleep score of 66. My toss and turn rate was on the higher side as it fluctuated from 23 to 40 depending on the level of my stress so this is the area that I need to work on the most. I also learned that my heart rate is in the 60-70 BPM range while my respiratory rate is consistent at 11-12 breaths per minute. My favorite part has been the warming feature though — there's honestly nothing better than coming home to a toasty bed. Now, I don't even have to turn the heat on in my apartment, so I'm improving my health and saving money at the same time! (Naturally, the room is usually a solid 67 degrees fahrenheit).

When I started this experiment, my sleep score (the time slept combined with tosses and turns) was deemed poor at 58. Seven days later, it has increased to 75 which is considered average. I apparently move around in bed too much throughout my sleep cycle. In the past I've blamed it on not being comfortable enough, but now that I have a new mattress that makes my bed even cozier than it was before, there's clearly an underlying issue here.



Bad sleep can be caused by many things including irregular sleep schedules, anxiety, depression, snoring, ruminating thoughts, poor sleep hygiene, restless leg syndrome and sleep apnea. Dr. Jeffrey Miller, who is board certified in sleep medicine, pulmonary disease and critical care, says that fixing your sleep hygiene is the key to improvement. "Maintain a regular sleep schedule, the time in bed should be 7-8 hours, comfortable bedroom, no dozing prior to bedtime," he says. "Avoid fluid, caffeine, alcohol and nicotine within a few hours of bedtime."

Dr. Adam Splaver of NanoHealth Associates explains that it's important to identify which type of insomnia you might be experiencing to determine the best methods for improving your sleep. Insomnia takes on five forms: acute (brief episodes during stressful periods but requires no treatment), chronic (usually lasts three nights a week for 3+ months), comorbid (in relation to anxiety, depression, pain and sleep apnea), onset (difficulty falling asleep at the beginning of the night) and maintenance (difficulty staying asleep and getting back to sleep).

Many doctors will recommend that troubled sleepers expose themselves to more natural light during the day, but that can be a difficult task when you work indoors and your office space has terrible lighting and possibly no windows. Dr. Robert Brown, author of *Toxic Home/Conscious Home*, points out that a lack of melatonin can also contribute to bad sleep. "Ideally, you should be asleep before 1:00 a.m. as peak melatonin secretion is between 1-3:00 a.m.," he says. "Exposure to any ambient light in the bedroom can also significantly impact the quality of sleep you receive. Turn off any lamps, nightlights, and bright clock displays and avoid viewing any LED screens (televisions, smartphones, tablets, etc.) thirty minutes before bedtime."

Chris Brantner, a certified sleep science coach and founder of Sleep Zoo, states that people need to declutter and maintain a state of calmness in their bedroom in order to effectively improve their sleep. "This will help you not be overly stimulated when you walk in your room," he says. "Consider getting a diffuser and use lavender oil to help calm you. Calming noises like babbling brooks and rain sounds are great for easing your mood."

Brantner also recommends sleeping in the cold, but applying heating pads or mattress toppers for extra warmth when necessary. "The optimal temperature for sleep is in the mid-60s," he says. "This helps your body cool and ease into sleep."

Hydrating before you snooze is also a key to achieving good sleep, but Dr. Brown points out that if frequent urination follows, this can be a symptom of sleep apnea. "Most people associate sleep apnea with snoring," he adds. "But, it is also evident that each time you become hypoxic (or do not have enough oxygen in your blood), the body produces adrenaline which will stimulate your kidneys to produce urine."

Of course, it's always worth visiting a sleep specialist if any of these problems persist and develop a pattern — you might need to go to a sleep lab to get a polysomnogram done in order to figure out what's really going on when you're not awake. Dr. Brown recommends "targeting the issue at its core and regulating your body's natural sleep cycle first and foremost" before making any serious changes. Eight's sleep tracker essentially does some of that homework for you. As much as I get freaked out by the concept of making our homes *too* smart with all of this advanced technology, smart mattresses are the future we need right now and I can literally sleep at night standing behind that belief.

<http://www.papermag.com/smart-mattress-eight-review-2530289851.html>