

Feedback from the Breakout groups

Breakout Group 1

Dr Simon Durrant

Could better sleep help improve memory in older adults?

There was a good exchange of information between the delegates who shared their experiences about sleep and how they felt about it impacting their memories. It seemed a largely unstructured discussion but with hindsight had some natural structure.

Some people found useful information to help them improve sleep quality. There was also an exchange of information about the brain and those items which inhibit sleep such as medication, alcohol, eating a heavy meal and using computers before going to bed. The effect of time zones and shift work was also discussed.

There was a wide variation in people's experiences regarding sleep and memory, particularly regarding films and music. People recognised that they found learning things more difficult now that they had retired.

Breakout Group 2

Dr Kate Porcheret

Circadian Clock

There was plenty of discussion and information shared between members of the group.

A better understanding of the shift between our innate body clock and modern life requirements – when do I feel tired? If you feel you need a nap, then have one. Not necessary to think about it all the time but useful to find high and low points during the day. Consider planning daily activities to fit in with personal circadian clock.

0400 – 0600: alertness level is equivalent to over the limit of alcohol intake.

Circadian rhythm: people in a bunker changed the distribution of their sleep. The body remembers the type of sleep from the last sleep schedule.

More insight into the rhythms of sleep and slow wave sleep: REM is very like being awake.

U3A people are active people so catch up is important. Don't think about sleep as dead time. An hour and a half usually covers the full sleep cycle. Some very useful information to aid better sleep and reduce sleepless nights due to bad habits.

Identifying where my circadian clocks needs a rest!

The complexity of sleep and its functions with some understanding of current research imperatives. It has been proved that for cancer patients, there is real benefit from taking medicine at the right time. Medicine should be taking the circadian clock into account.

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Breakout Group 3

Lynne Cox

How can we improve sleep quality in older adults?

Things that keep us awake

Party noise
Unexpected/unusual noise
Strange bed
Worry about oversleeping
Anxiety
Full moon
Too much caffeine
Medication
Visits to the loo
Late meals

Things that aid sleep

regular/high pitched noise
Continuity / routine
Knitting / colouring
Undemanding activity
Watching the News
Repetitive actions
Reading
Temperature
Physical activity
Being outside during the day
Hot water bottle

Illness can affect sleep. People who only have a few hours' sleep each night need to catch up at some point. Long term night shifts can affect health and work efficiency.

Violence can make people more violent. Earth's magnetism and ley lines may affect sleep.

Breakout Group 4

Mandy Topp

Shared Learning Projects (SLPs)

Members gained an understanding about the concepts of SLPs and a better appreciation of how U3A helps and promotes these projects. It was suggested that there needed to be a greater interest at Network and Neighbourhood group level to ensure more projects got off the ground.

There was some scepticism about SLPs which were seen to focus on aspects of social history and little else.

Although some felt they did not learn anything really new, some had been prompted to think 'outside the box' by others' comments. Ideas were generated for future projects, as well as working together in Networks for a project.

Breakout Group 5

Hilary Wells

Do we need to make a special effort to encourage men to join interest groups?

In general, the group was unable to focus on its objective. There was a range of views about how U3As should move forward. There is a need to focus on using social media to attract more men.

It was suggested that United in Third Age Learning as opposed to University of the Third Age might be a more appropriate title for the organisation.

The discussion was interesting but no real ideas came from it.

