



# Investigation in Teen Sleep

Can you spot the cards in play?

*3 young people to listen to, several factors to identify.*

There are no right or wrong answers.

We observe, we question, we try to understand.



**TO NOT  
DOZE OFF**



## Still in the Fog

**Léa, 16**

Léa lives with her mother and her little brother in a 5½ apartment. Since her parents' separation, she hasn't been sleeping well. She's a night owl: she starts to feel awake around 10 p.m., even though she knows she should be sleeping. Every night, she stays on TikTok or DMs until late. In the morning, she has a hard time getting up at 7 a.m. for school, completely exhausted. On weekends, she sleeps until noon to "catch up" on her sleep, but on Sunday evening, sleep won't come — and the cycle starts again.

She gave up sports this year — no more energy, no more motivation. At school, she often dozes off and loses focus easily. For her birthday, her mother gave her new ultra-soft sheets, and they redecorated her room together to put things she likes on the walls. The old wallpaper from previous tenants is gone. She also started lowering the temperature of her room to around 19 °C after hearing an influencer talk about it — she loves it. Now she says her bed is "the only place that understands her."

## Anxiety Before Midnight

**Alex, 17**



Alex lives with both of his parents, who are fairly present but discreet. He is the captain of the volleyball team and his grades are decent. But for a while now, he has felt a tension building, without any clear reason. Every evening, he thinks about a thousand things, often negative ones. He scrolls on Instagram, watches shorts on YouTube, then around midnight he vapes cannabis to "fall asleep faster." It makes him sleepy, but lately it feels like he spends the night dreaming or doing things all night, and sometimes he even wakes up and watches the time pass on his phone.

He never feels rested, even after 8 hours of "sleep." He doesn't talk about it much, afraid of being judged or having his vape taken away — or worse, his phone. He stopped going to see the school counselor after a conversation he found "too serious." During the day, he is often irritable but hides it behind his humor. From the outside, everything seems fine. Inside, he's just looking for a pause.

## The Zigzag of Hormones

**Manel, 20**

Manel shares an apartment with two roommates. She is in her first year of nursing school. She has always been a light sleeper, but it's especially difficult around her period. About a week before, she sleeps poorly, overthinks a lot, and sometimes cries for no clear reason. She almost dropped a course last year because of her intense ups and downs. But she eventually talked about it with a nurse at her CÉGEP. Since then, she has been using an app to track her cycles and to take better care of herself around her period. Following the nurse's advice, she does yoga two evenings a week and stopped using screens after 9 p.m. An hour before her ideal bedtime, she switches into sleep mode — pajamas, a book — and slowly transitions into the softness of her bed. It's not perfect, but she understands her body better. She now knows that her insomnia isn't "all in her head," and that she has tools to get through those moments. She sometimes talks about it with her roommates, who support her by listening and also by being mindful of noise after 10 p.m.

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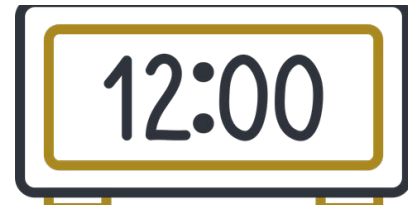
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# Activity Guide and Answer Key

## Investigation in Teen Sleep

### OBJECTIVE :

Using short, **realistic portraits**, students are invited to play sleep detectives: **identify the clues that influence sleep, understand what helps or hinders it**, and reflect on possible and appropriate solutions.

✦ This activity aims to develop a **nuanced understanding** of sleep in adolescence, taking into account the **biological, psychological, social, and cultural realities of young people**.

### WHY USE A STORY-BASED APPROACH?

A narrative approach helps to:

- encourage identification: "This could be me, a friend, someone in my class or in my group."
- address sensitive topics (screens, stress, cannabis, insomnia, mental health) without direct confrontation
- reduce moralizing or guilt-inducing messages, which can be counterproductive when it comes to feeling safe and calm enough to fall asleep
- encourage open, respectful discussions that recognize diversity and promote inclusion
- make sleep concrete, accessible, and contextualized, regardless of students' school, social, or cultural environments.

### WHO IS IT FOR ?

The Investigation in Teen Sleep is a playful, narrative-based tool designed for people who want to open a conversation with young people about their sleep.

The tool is intended for:

- high school and CÉGEP teachers
- professionals and practitioners working in school, community, or health settings
- parents





# FACILITATOR PREPARATION

**Before the activity, it is recommended to:**

→ become familiar with the factors that influence sleep here: **TNDO Tools**

Here are two suggestions in French:

- explore the [micro-learning training modules](#) (short 5–10 minutes videos - English subtitles)
- read the article: [Le sommeil des adolescents, pierre angulaire de leur santé mentale](#) (Pilon, Touchette & Lord, 2022)

→ review the section “**Answer Key – Factors to Identify**”. *The answer key is a guide, not a perfect answer. It is meant to support discussion and help adults feel confident in their role, while preserving the richness of young people’s perspectives.*

→ **Print or project** Léa, Axel or Manel’s portraits

→ prepare a list of **local resources** (school, community, or health services) that young people could be referred to if needed.

# HOW TO USE THE TOOL?

The activity can be carried out:

- with the **whole class**
- in **small groups**
- **individually**, followed by a group discussion

Each team (or each student) receives **one portrait at a time**.

Avoid giving the three portraits simultaneously in order to:

- encourage deeper analysis
- stimulate discussion and interpretation

**A group discussion is then facilitated around the portrait:**

- What clues influence sleep?
- What helps? What makes things more difficult?
- Which factors can be changed? Which are less modifiable?

## FACILITATION APPROACH

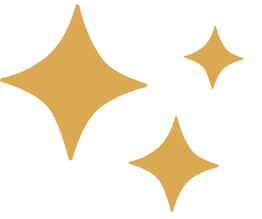
- Curiosity rather than judgment
- Open-ended questions
- Normalize: *"Many young people experience this"*
- Avoid guilt and moralizing tone
- Highlight existing strengths
- Encourage asking for help when needed

## KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

This activity may bring up **personal concerns or potential red flags**.

Provide a safe space to:

- welcome students' voices
- normalize their experiences
- refer, if needed, to appropriate resources



## Suggested Procedure (30–45 minutes)



### 1. Launch the investigation (5–10 min)

Present the instructions: “You are going to read the story of a young person. Your mission: identify everything that might influence their sleep, positively or negatively.”

- **Invite students to identify** (highlight, annotate, or name out loud, etc.) on:
  - life habits
  - life context
  - emotions
  - life constraints (school, work, screens, stress, relationships, etc.)
- Remind them that **there are no right or wrong answers**—only clues to observe (see Answer Key).



## Suggested Procedure (30–45 minutes)



### 2. Guided discussion around the portrait (15–20 min)

For each portrait, facilitate discussion using open-ended questions, giving students' voices a central role:

- What might interfere with this young person's sleep?
- What helps or protects their sleep?
- Which strategies seem useful... or less effective in the long term?
- What would you say if this were your best friend?

**On the board or in notes, list the biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing sleep, categorizing them into two groups:**

- **Risk Factors**
- **Protective Factors**





# Answer Key – Factors to Identify

## Risk Factors

## Protective Factors

### Still in the Fog – Léa, 16

- Late chronotype + evening screen use
- Irregular schedule (sleeping in on weekends)
- Sedentary lifestyle / stopped doing sports

- Personal bedroom, comfortable bed, calming environment
- Cool temperature that promotes sleep

### Anxiety Before Midnight – Alex, 17

- Cannabis to fall asleep (fragmented sleep)
- Rumination/unexpressed anxiety
- Late-night screen use

- Regular physical activity
- Access to academic/health support

### The Zigzag of Hormones – Manel, 20

- Sleep disrupted by hormonal cycle / premenstrual anxiety

- No screens in the evening
- Calm bedtime routine
- Yoga / relaxation
- Nurse follow-up
- Support from roommates