

# Survive & thrive Shift work



**Hello**, my name is Dr Bhatia. I am a NHS GP and the founder of Humble. Humble is an organisation that helps bring out our best.

## Are you a shift worker?

A shift worker is someone who is working when they would normally be asleep (e.g. night staff, travellers and carers). Shifts affect our performance and health. Alas the physical and mental health effects of shift working can be serious.\*British medical journal 2016:355.



## Timing matters

Every cell in our body has its own 24 hour clock that needs to be synchronised with a clock in our brain. These clocks are regulated by factors such as light, exercise, food, temperature and stress (LEFTS) and can only be shifted by 2 hours a day. That's why we get jet lagged when we fly across time zones. So shift working is challenging like travelling to another timezone, because we need to get our body clocks back in sync.

## Getting your LEFTS right

The good news is that by timing your exposure to light, exercise, food temperature and stress you can shift and maintain your body clock in the right time zone. It helps to:

**Accept**- it takes time to shift and that you will not be performing at your best.

**Anticipate**- prioritise and plan to get your LEFTS right and ease your transitions.

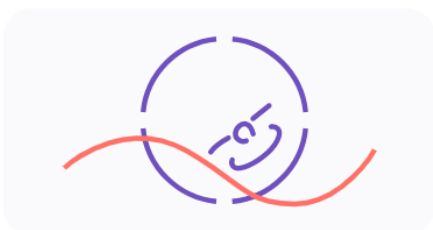
**Act**- set your new wake up time and bedtimes to stabilise your body clock.

**Adapt**- refine your plan to suit each situation with flexibility and confidence.

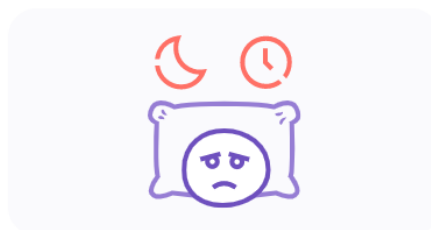
## Perhaps we can help?

We offer professional support for individuals, groups and organisations specialising in

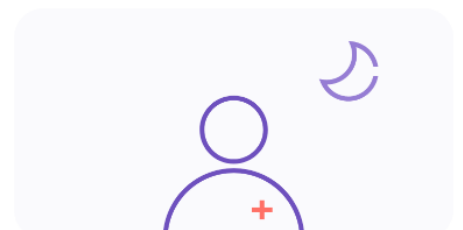
### Optimising sleep



### Managing insomnia



### Support for shift workers



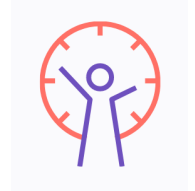
For further information and to book a session visit [www.humble.info](http://www.humble.info)

# A Humble guide to time travelling for shift workers

It can be helpful to think of working shifts like you are travelling to a new time zone and returning home safe. The journey has 5 stages:

## 1. At home (set a normal body clock)

- a. Set reminders to wake-up, walk-outside, wind-down and go to bed at regular times.
- b. Get your LEFTS right (light, exercise food, temperature and soothe). Download an explanatory pdf at [www.humblesleep.com](http://www.humblesleep.com)



## 2. Take off (from your normal time zone)

- a. The morning before your night shift, delay your body clock by waking naturally (no early alarms), keep the lights low (eg with blue blocking glasses) and eat a late breakfast.
- b. If possible, top up the sleep tanks with a 90 min afternoon nap followed by some exercise and a late supper so you are alert on the night shift.



## 3. Flying (in the night shift zone)

- a. At the start of the night shift keep fresh with water and bright lights.
- b. Be aware your performance is impaired. Avoid caffeine, sugar or alcohol. Nap for a maximum of 20 mins if you need to.
- c. Avoid eating and bright lights 2 hours before your new bed times.
- d. Get home safely and wind down with a candle and hot shower before bed.
- a. Some people use drugs like sleeping tablets, ashwagandha, Mg threonate or melatonin. These have side effects so consult with your doctor if you are unsure.
- e. If you wake before you intended, do something relaxing (no screens) – keep it dark, cold and soothing. If you struggle with insomnia do talk with your GP or us at [www.humblesleep.com](http://www.humblesleep.com) for personalised support.
- f. When you wake up at your new “set wake up time”, splash or shower with cold water and exercise in daylight if possible before your next night shift.



## 4. Landing (back to your normal time zone)

- a. Ending your last night shift wind-down by avoiding bright lights and caffeine.
- b. Take an early nap (90 or 180 min) to top up the sleep tank.
- c. Wake and get daylight and exercise and eat if possible.
- d. Try to stay safely awake until near your normal bed time.
- e. Unwind before bed by writing a journal to release your thoughts and positively plan your next few days.



## 5. Home again (optimise your normal body clock)

- a. Follow the tips stage 1 above.

For further information and support visit [www.humble.info](http://www.humble.info)