# Denise Asks Awkward Questions – Bad Snoring

**Denise:** Hello everybody. I'm comedian Denise Scott, and welcome to Denise Asks Awkward Questions with Jean Hailes. My guest today is the CEO of the Sleep Health Foundation, Dr. Moira Junge. She is a guru for all the people out there, including me, who toss and turn at night. So without further ado, let's get awkward.

Moira, no surprises here, but there are a few questions about snoring, and the first question is from Yulan in Mount Gambia, South Australia, who writes, "My husband's snoring has got so bad, we are now sleeping in separate beds. I'm worried about our sex life and whether there is something wrong with him."

**Moira:** Well, the first thing I can say is that you don't have to have same beds to have sex. That's important to remember that you could be in separate beds, if you can meet up in the morning, I mean, it could be just a few nights a week that you're in different beds. But the real key point here for Yulan's husband, I suspect he probably has obstructive sleep apnea, which is a sleep disorder. And people with sleep apnea but are notorious for their loud snoring.

And it's usually, it's a bit sort of stigmatizing and people get embarrassed about it or teased about it. And people don't realize, often, that it's actually can be a really serious health issue. Someone snoring very loudly and having gasping sounds... because sleep apnea, the word apnea is Latin for absence of breathing. So people have this loud snoring, but they also have these intermittent periods of, you know, not breathing. It can be 10 seconds, could be up to 60 seconds. It's quite frightening for the person watching it.

**Denise:** 60 seconds!

**Moira:** Yeah. So I would suggest that Yulan talks to her husband about getting him to see the GP and work out whether it's sleep apnea or not. Because a GP would be the person who be able to do a sleep referral for him to go and have a sleep study. And whether that's at a sleep center or sometimes they can be in your home these days, and even if you're in remote Australia, you could probably have a sleep physician referral to someone online and they can send you the equipment in the mail. So it's really amazing these days what can happen with that.

**Denise:** That's extraordinary. You could get the equipment in the mail!

**Moira:** Yeah, absolutely. With certain patients, you know, there's certain people who might fit the criteria that they don't need to be monitored overnight in the sleep study. But the key thing really is that the snoring, and loud enough that they're sleeping in different rooms, it's not just a social issue and worried about the relationship, it can be a really important health issue.

He's at risk of, you know, hypertension and obesity and probably already has those things actually. So treating the sleep apnea can give people more energy. They can start losing weight. They can feel so much better once the snoring is fixed. So that's the take home really there.

**Denise:** Ang from Dubbo, New South Wales has a very interesting question, "Does counting sheep actually work?"

**Moira:** Fantastic question. Well, there's never been a, you know, double blinded, placebo controlled, randomized trial on counting sheep. As a person with sleep expertise it's not something I've ever said, count sheep. But having said that, if it works for you, then it works.

**Denise:** You know, I actually used to count sheep, I'm an insomniac, and there reached a point where I'd get obsessed with where they went. So I'd see a sheep, you know, jump over the stile and then I think, well, where's it gonna go to now?

**Moira:** It doesn't sound like a good strategy.

**Denise:** No, it wasn't a good strategy...

**Moira:** No, I think that's it.

**Denise:** ...for me.

**Moira:** Yeah, that's right. So it's not a recommended strategy. And I think in general, exactly what you've just sort of highlighted is that it's... it can just be a little bit too... either too boring or too complex. And the idea of it really, or any kind of sleep strategy, is often just about distraction. And it's about giving you a rest from your racing mind or your worries about tomorrow, or...

**Denise:** I also used to, on the sheep line, go through quite mundane lists. I would think about all the people that lived in my street as a kid. And I would start going through, so you know, the Thomas's at house number two, and I'd try and remember all their names and the order in which they were born. And actually, it was really comforting and quite...

**Moira:** And that worked for you? Did it work?

**Denise:** No.

**Moira:** No.

**Denise:** It was just an interesting exercise.

**Moira:** Well, the thing about the ... so I think that counting sheep does have too much of a rabbit hole kind of... there's just too many loops. And what we wanna encourage with people is particularly say mindfulness based meditation, which is a strong recommendation of the Sleep Health Foundation. And, you know, every health professional would know the benefits of mindfulness meditation for sleep, and that what it does is actually give you a rest from forward thinking or past thinking and just putting your focus and all of your attention on the present moment. So often it can be just the simplicity of your breath. The breath is always available to you as a refocus of attention. So whether it's day or night, or you're in Melbourne or London, you can use your breath to anchor yourself to the present moment.

Just by this breath, Denise Asks Awkward Questions - and the next one, and all of a sudden you're blocking out all that future and past thinking and without judgment and without kind of analysis. So just switching everything off is better.

**Denise:** And your voice, oh gosh.

All right, that's it for today. If I'm not here and you have more questions, go to jeanhailes.org au.

Bye everybody.

Information about Jean Hailes for Women’s Health

Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the health of all women, girls and gender-diverse people. For free, evidence-based and easy-to-understand health information, visit [www.jeanhailes.org.au](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au).

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