# Denise Asks Awkward Questions – Sleep Hygiene, Fact vs Fiction

**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!

So we have a question from Danni who lives in Lismore, New South Wales, where of course there's been the dreadful flooding of recent times, so wishing Danni and all in Lismore well. But meanwhile, Danni wants to know, "Is sleep hygiene another way to sell pillows, or is it real?"

**Moira:** Well, sleep hygiene, the term, is real.

**Denise:** What is it?

**Moira:** It's that, you would think it's to do with like clean sheets or something, wouldn't you? Nothing to do with hygiene or cleanliness. It's a set of principles and behaviors that are conducive to sleeping well on a regular basis. So when you'd look up, you know, 'How do I sleep better?' and those sort of listicles of things, it'd be things around your caffeine, your alcohol, the lights...

**Denise:** Right.

**Moira:** ...the noise. So they're good, good, helpful tips and not harmful. Only caveat would be to say if you've got insomnia already, like a chronic insomnia or you've got a bit of sleep specific anxiety and you're trying too hard, putting too much sleep effort in, don't go to the sleep hygiene list because it's not what you need.

Because if you have that and you go to this list and it says, go to bed at the same time every night, or have a chamomile tea at 10 o'clock, all these sort of rules and rigidity, when you've got a sleep problem, you actually have to sit up a bit later, believe it or not. You actually have to match the time in bed with the amount of sleep that you're realistically getting. So if you're getting six hours, I would say to someone, well, why are you getting to bed at 10? Why are you doing all these sort of rules and rituals when you haven't been to sleep before one o'clock for 10 years?

And with Danni's case, like in Lismore and particularly say if, if this was from earlier this year, really sleep hygiene, the list is not gonna really help that much. Like how can you go to bed at the same time when you're in a crisis?

And same with shift workers, like it's a bit of a problem sometimes, this list of don't have caffeine or don't... and you think, well, if you're sort of having to stay up all night, something that's recommended sometimes is to, to have appropriately timed caffeine as a fatigue countermeasure. As a strategy.

So there's a bit of work being done in in the sleep world with that list to make it specific for different age groups or different populations, or if you're a shift worker or not. So beware of the sleep hygiene list, depending on your own set of circumstances.

**Denise:** Alright, 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

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