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Talk of getting a good night's sleep may be something of a cliché these days, but it's at the forefront of our thoughts for a reason. Without the usual eight hours a night, we can feel sluggish or irritable during the day, and our ability to function properly can be impaired.

If our day job requires us to make on-the-spot decisions and deal with people face-to-face, it's even more essential that we're on the ball at all times.

If you're finding that your sleep pattern is somewhat disjointed, and you're having less than the recommended dose of shut-eye, it could be that your mattress is to blame.

Contrary to popular belief, a hard mattress is not necessarily the best thing for your back and, if you tend to suffer from backache, a hard mattress could just make the problem worse. A super-soft mattress isn't ideal either, because you'll just sink into the bed without sufficient support.

Instead, think like Goldilocks (without stealing the porridge). She tested each bed in turn, and soon found that the medium-sized one was just right. Use the same principle with mattresses: a semi-firm **Airsprung mattress** is the one to go for – one that's soft enough to feel comfortable, but firm enough to give support.

Clete Kushida, Director of the Stanford Centre for Human Sleep Research, advised WebMD, a leading online publication for health and medical news: "Lie on your side. If your shoulders and hips are sinking, if you feel your spine is not aligned, it's probably too soft. If you feel pain and discomfort, it's probably too firm."



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According to Kushida, choosing the right mattress depends very much on your body and individual preference. Foam mattresses that mould into the body's shape are ideal for people who don't move much in their sleep, but not so good for people who do. Others may prefer coil Airsprung mattresses or ones with pocket springs.

Whichever Airsprung mattress you ultimately choose, it's important to pick one that's right for you, rather than one that promises the earth. As Kushida advised: "'Best' doesn't necessarily mean 'most expensive'. Just make sure it's well constructed."

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