

What your Sleeping Position Reveals

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Title: What your Sleeping Position Says About You

Description: Your sleeping position is telling you something about your personality and your relationship. Learn about the common traits and health issues.

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6 Common Sleeping Positions - What are they trying to tell you?

You're in bed, you're just about to drift off to sleep and you automatically assume your favorite sleeping position. You've probably slept this way since childhood and like most people, you'd have trouble falling asleep any other way. Maybe you're most relaxed on your back with your arms down by your sides, like the corpse pose (savasana) that ends your yoga class, or curled up on your side with your knees drawn up and blankets pulled up to your chin. Whatever makes you feel most tranquil just before sleep may actually be revealing something about you.

Two British researchers, Robert Phipps and Chris Idzikowski conducted independent surveys and both found a connection between certain sleeping positions and some psychological traits. While you cannot draw direct conclusions from these connections, the meaning of sleeping positions may have some bearing on you and your relationships. Some positions have health considerations and may be placing your neck, back or shoulders under strain. These videos will give you some insight into releasing stress in those areas:

- Releasing Neck and Shoulder Tension <http://www.gaia.com/video/releasing-neck-and-shoulder-tension>
- Mayo Clinic Wellness Solutions for Back Pain – Yoga <http://www.gaia.com/video/yoga-10>

Body language can sometimes reveal silent messages about your subconscious thoughts and be translated into your preferred sleeping positions. Let's take a look at some common sleeping positions and what they mean:

1. The Fetal Position

This is the most common preferred position, 41% of people studied prefer to fall asleep this way. If you look only at women, the number rises to 51%, according to Professor Idzikowski. This position means you're sleeping on your side, knees pulled up toward your chest with your arms bent and hands near your face on the pillow. You may have one arm under the pillow tucked away while the other is near your chin. This is a classic "comforting" posture and may be an attempt to settle and calm you.

Studies show that those who prefer the fetal position can be sensitive and shy at first, but when relaxed, are warm, very organized and conscientious. This position can be stressful on your back, so you may want to place a pillow between your knees to take some of the pressure off.

2. Side Sleepers

The next most common position is the side sleeper; sometimes called "the log." About 15% of the study participants preferred this position where you are lying straight on your side with your arms down by your side, resting on your hip. It can be difficult to comfortably support your neck and head in this position, so be sure to find a pillow that is soft enough to cradle your face. Also, sleeping on your side can cause more facial wrinkles.

The meaning of sleeping positions like this one commonly reveals that you have an easy-going nature, are quite trusting and enjoy being part of a larger group.

3. The Yearner

With nearly as many “yearner position” sleepers as side sleepers (13%), this is a variation of the most popular fetal position. In this pose, the yearner has slightly bent legs and the head slightly angles off the center of the pillow. The arms are stretched forward (not tucked under the pillow or face as in the fetal position) as if they’re reaching for something.

Personality traits that are closely related to this position indicate you have an open mind, but may also be a bit suspicious or cynical. You can be slow to make decisions, but firm in those choices once they’re made. This position is also hard on your neck so try to find a pillow that supports your head.

4. The Soldier

This position is favored by about 8% of the participants studied. The soldier position is one where you sleep on your back with your arms down by your side, your legs straight and somewhat close together. Bear in mind that those who sleep on their backs often snore and may be prone to sleep apnea. However, this is a well-supported position for your back and neck.

The meaning of sleeping positions like The Soldier suggests you’re typically quiet and more reserved. You tend to set high standards for yourself and those around you.

5. Freefall or Stomach Sleepers

This position has you sleeping on your stomach with your head turned to one side and arms up around your pillow. This is preferred by about 7% of those studied and can place a strain on your back. You can counteract that stress on your spine by placing a pillow under your hips to ease some of the pressure.

Common traits if you’re a freefall sleeper include being a bit impulsive and extroverted. You shy away from touchy or tense situations and don’t react well to criticism.

6. The Starfish

The starfish is a position where you sleep on your back and your legs and arms are spread out. As with other back-sleeping positions, you are more prone to snoring and it can be hard on your back. You may want to place a pillow under your knees to relieve any pressure on your spine.

This type of sleeper is often a great friend, a good listener and a willing helper. You don’t crave the spotlight and are supportive and dependable.

Sleeping with your Partner - What it says about your Relationship

What happens when you mix two different sleeping styles together in one bed? If you’re the stomach sleeper and your partner is a back sleeper, how do you share the space when you’re sleeping? What does your sleeping position say about your relationship?

There are a number of recognized sleeping styles for couples:

- **Spooning:** this is a very common position for couples that trust each other and are comfortable together. One person lies behind the other and snuggles up to their partner’s back with knees folding inside the knees of the other, arm resting over the front person’s ribs. It can suggest that one of the partners is protective of the other and that all is well with the relationship.
- **The Chase:** this is very much like spooning, only one partner has moved over to the side of the bed and the other is “chasing” them to that side and loosely spooning with them. This could indicate that one of you is in need of more space in the relationship.
- **Back to Back:** even though you’re facing opposite directions, when your backs are touching, this is a sign of great affection and can signal a good balance in your relationship. When you are

moving apart more and more and not touching at all, that may be a sign that you are drifting apart in your waking relationship as well.

- **The Bed Hog:** when one partner is taking up the majority of bed space, leaving the other no room to sleep, that may be a sign the one partner is dominating the relationship and leaving the other partner uncomfortable. This may be a sign of selfishness or a controlling attitude.
- **The Nuzzle:** this position has one partner sleeping on his/her back and the other rests his/her head on the partner's chest. Common with new couples, it signifies a value for intimacy and contact, regardless of the quality of sleep.

When sleeping, you're not conscious of making decisions about how and in what positions you sleep. Your subconscious takes over and the body language of your sleeping position might reveal hints about your waking relationship.

How your Sleep Position may be causing you Pain

Getting a good night's sleep is so important to your health and sense of well-being. But just because you go to bed at a reasonable hour doesn't mean you don't wake up with stiff muscles and soreness. Perhaps the position you're sleeping in is causing pain by putting extra stress on your back and neck or maybe your sleep is being constantly interrupted by snoring or headaches.

Dr. Steven Park, author of *Sleep, Interrupted*, told [WebMD](#) that "fatigue, sleep apnea, headaches, heartburn, and back pain are some complaints that can be aggravated by improper sleep posture." It *IS* possible to adapt your sleeping style to alleviate the pressure and relieve your pain. Simple changes can take away that strain and give you a more restful and restorative sleep.

If you sleep:

- **on your back:** place a pillow under your knees and keep your arms down by your side to alleviate back pain as well as any strain on your shoulders
- **on your side:** keep your arms down by your sides to support your spine and relieve any pain in your neck and back
- **in the starfish position:** when you're on your back with your arms above your head, you're putting strain on your shoulders and undue pressure on your upper back; keep your arms down by your side to reduce the stress and relieve any shoulder pain
- **on your stomach:** support your spine by placing a pillow under your hips; this position also puts a strain on your neck, since you have to turn your head to one side or the other
- **on your side:** place a pillow between your knees to lessen the strain on your lower back

So, what is the meaning of various common sleeping positions? Is it causing you pain or placing stress on your back or neck? If so, try to make some subtle adjustments to your preferred position using some of the suggestions above. For more information and access to practices for releasing tension in your body, take a look at the resources found in these videos and articles:

Videos:

- Relax and Unwind: <http://www.gaia.com/video/relax-and-unwind#>
- Sunset Release: <http://www.gaia.com/video/sunset-release>

Articles:

- 9 Yoga Poses for Releasing Shoulder Tension <http://www.gaia.com/article/9-yoga-poses-relieving-shoulder-tension>
- Yoga for a Healthy Back <http://www.gaia.com/article/yoga-healthy-back>
- 5 Healing Ways to Approach Lower Back Pain: <http://www.gaia.com/node/65036>