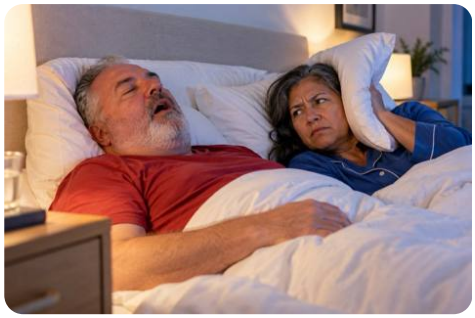
NEWS LESSON

When Sharing a Bed Stops Working



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would separate beds make a relationship seem less close to you?
2. Which matters more for sharing a space: routines or plenty of room?
3. Why do some ordinary household choices make people feel judged?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**clinging**	☐	A	lasting for a long time or happening again and again
2	**population**	☐	B	the ability to accept something annoying without getting angry
3	**chronic**	☐	C	to talk with someone to reach an agreement
4	**tolerance**	☐	D	the feeling of being respected and valued
5	**consequently**	☐	E	being very near to someone or something
6	**proximity**	☐	F	all the people who live in a place or belong to a group
7	**dignity**	☐	G	holding on tightly to something
8	**negotiate**	☐	H	as a result

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

One partner snores, the other rises early and likes a cooler room. Reports on a 2025 US survey suggest separate sleeping is not unusual, though they do not show it improves relationships.

1 One person snores. The other gets up early, likes a colder room or ends up clinging to the edge of the mattress. Sharing a bed can be intimate and thoroughly impractical. Sleeping separately may solve an ordinary problem, even if other people read it as a sign of trouble.

2 The expression sleep divorce describes an arrangement in which a couple chooses separate beds or rooms for better rest, without separating romantically. Reporting on a 2025 US sleep survey suggested that the practice was far from exceptional. Yet the popularity of a phrase does not establish whether the arrangement improves relationships or how widely it occurs outside the surveyed population.

3 There is a plausible argument in its favour. Chronic sleep disruption can affect mood, attention and tolerance, making everyday disagreements more difficult to manage. A couple who both sleep better may consequently have more energy for their relationship. However, physical closeness can also be reassuring, and one partner may feel lonely or rejected if they experience the decision differently. For some couples it is a temporary experiment; for others, an ordinary routine that protects both people's rest.

4 Rather than treating separate sleeping as a permanent binary choice, some couples negotiate flexible arrangements. They may share a bedroom most nights while allowing separate space during illness or demanding working periods. Others look into temperature, bedding or bedtime routines before changing rooms. The relevant measure of success is whether the arrangement suits both people.

5 Practical solutions should not replace medical attention when it is needed. Loud habitual snoring accompanied by breathing interruptions, for example, may indicate sleep apnoea. Reducing disturbance to a partner can be worthwhile, but the underlying cause should not be brushed aside. What matters is whether both partners have a say. Separate bedrooms imposed by one person are different from a decision discussed openly, with closeness maintained in other ways.

6 Housing conditions complicate the fashionable presentation of sleep divorce as a straightforward lifestyle choice. Separate rooms require space that many couples, particularly those facing high rents or crowded housing, simply do not have. Even separate beds may be impractical. Other arrangements, including different duvets, adjusted bedtimes or changes to light and noise, may be more realistic.

7 The language used between partners also matters. Sleep disruption is often involuntary, and framing it as somebody's fault can turn a practical difficulty into an emotional conflict. Couples benefit from discussing their needs without making physical proximity the sole measure of affection. Whatever the arrangement, both partners should feel that the decision respects their comfort, dignity and desire for closeness.

8 The wider debate reveals how readily cultural expectations become mistaken for relationship rules. Two people can share a bed and feel emotionally distant, or sleep in different rooms and maintain a close partnership. Rather than holding up one arrangement as the romantic ideal, perhaps couples should be encouraged to discuss sleep as they would any other shared responsibility: honestly and without embarrassment.

Sources: American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer would still call a couple close if they slept in different rooms. T F NG
2. According to the text, couples who share a bed are always emotionally close. T F NG
3. Couples who sleep in separate beds divorce less often than those who share. T F NG
4. Sleeping apart is likely to be easier for couples who live in larger homes. T F NG
5. The writer believes that separate bedrooms fully solve the problem of loud snoring. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

accompanied	binary	framing	imposed	intimate	involuntary	readily	sole

1. Blinking is largely _____ : we do it thousands of times a day without ever deciding to.
2. A curfew _____ by one flatmate on all the others is unlikely to last long.
3. Cost should not be the _____ criterion when a family chooses a school.
4. Rumours are _____ believed when they confirm what people already suspect.
5. A persistent cough may be _____ by a fever, in which case a doctor should be consulted.
6. By _____ the cuts as efficiency savings, the minister hoped to escape criticism.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Physical closeness can also be _____ . (ASSURE)
2. Chronic sleep _____ can affect mood and attention. (DISRUPT)
3. Loud _____ snoring may indicate sleep apnoea. (HABIT)
4. Housing conditions complicate the _____ presentation of the idea. (FASHION)
5. The findings have wider _____ for how couples think about intimacy. (IMPLY)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Several of these verbs are idiomatic, so read the whole sentence before you choose a particle.

along	apart	aside	down	into	on	up

1. The underlying cause of the snoring should not be brushed _____ .
2. The couple agreed to look _____ quieter mattresses before changing rooms.
3. Nobody should hold _____ one sleeping arrangement as the ideal for every couple.
4. Months of broken sleep had begun to wear her _____ .
5. They decided to sleep _____ it before making a final decision.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Should a couple explain sleeping separately to anyone else?
2. What other relationship rule deserves to be questioned?
3. What would make a practical compromise feel caring rather than distant?

9 Role-play: your snoring or my sleep

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the partner who cannot sleep

You have lain awake for weeks because of your partner's snoring. You want to try separate rooms. Explain how tired you are, but do not hurt your partner's feelings.

Student B · the partner who snores

You feel hurt that your partner wants a separate room. Say how you feel and suggest other ideas first, such as earplugs or different bedtimes. Agree to something if the plan is fair.

Useful phrases

I'm exhausted, and I can't go on like this.

It doesn't mean I love you any less.

Could we try earplugs first?

Let's try it for a month and see.

I'd feel lonely without you next to me.

We're not ending anything, we're just sleeping better.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree on a plan, and was it fair for both people?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 F · 3 A · 4 B · 5 H · 6 E · 7 D · 8 C

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 involuntary · 2 imposed · 3 sole · 4 readily · 5 accompanied · 6 framing

6 Word forms

1 reassuring · 2 disruption · 3 habitual · 4 fashionable · 5 implications

7 Language focus

1 aside · 2 into · 3 up · 4 down · 5 on

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