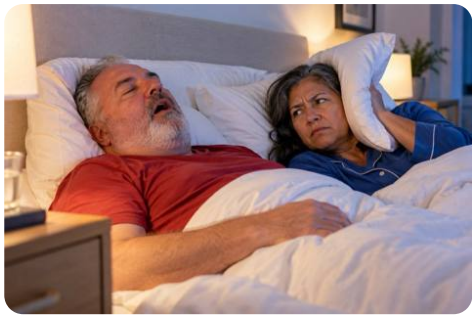
NEWS LESSON

The Bed That Became a Negotiation



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	**symbol**	☐	A	a thing that stands for an idea or a feeling
2	**intimacy**	☐	B	a feeling of worry or anger between people
3	**negotiation**	☐	C	statements that say someone did something wrong
4	**tension**	☐	D	a talk in which people try to reach an agreement
5	**disturbance**	☐	E	a very close and loving feeling between two people
6	**accusations**	☐	F	to show that something is probably true
7	**willpower**	☐	G	something that interrupts your rest or quiet
8	**indicate**	☐	H	the strong mind that helps you control what you do

3 Read

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

Open windows, late television and different alarms can wear a couple down. Separate rooms may help, though a small flat rarely leaves much space to experiment.

1 Sharing a bed is often treated as a symbol of a successful relationship. Yet anyone who has spent hours listening to a partner snore knows that intimacy and a good night's sleep do not always fit comfortably together. This tension has encouraged discussion of so-called sleep divorce: couples choosing separate sleeping arrangements without ending their relationship.

2 One partner may need the window open and the other may prefer a warm room. Add different alarms or a habit of watching television late, and bedtime can turn into a negotiation.

3 Reasons vary from different work schedules to restless movement, conflicting room temperatures and noise. A 2025 report discussing a survey carried out by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine suggested that sleeping separately was relatively common among US adults. The figures describe reported behaviour, not proof that separate bedrooms produce happier relationships.

4 There are possible advantages. Somebody who sleeps more peacefully may become less irritable and better able to enjoy time with their partner. Couples may also feel relieved when they stop blaming one another for interrupted nights. However, separate beds can reduce opportunities for closeness if the decision is not discussed openly.

5 The question is therefore more complicated than choosing between romance and rest. Some couples prefer separate rooms every night; others only sleep apart when one person has an early start or is unwell. Practical solutions such as earplugs, different bedding or agreed routines may also help. Sharing a bed also carries an emotional meaning. Friends or relatives might see separate bedrooms as a sign of trouble, even when the people involved are perfectly happy with the arrangement.

6 There are medical issues to consider. Regular loud snoring, particularly when linked to interrupted breathing or marked daytime sleepiness, can indicate a condition requiring assessment. Moving rooms may protect a partner's sleep without addressing the underlying problem.

7 Separate bedrooms are not an option for everybody. Couples in small flats may have little space to experiment and often simply have to put up with the disturbance. Moving to a larger home purely to improve sleep is financially unrealistic for many families. Less dramatic changes might help: separate duvets, different bedtimes, earplugs or agreed rules about noise and cutting down on screens late at night.

8 The best solution depends on the source of disturbance, the available space and how both people feel about the arrangement. It is also worth avoiding blame. Snoring or restless movement is not necessarily something a person can control through willpower. A discussion that focuses on practical needs rather than accusations is more likely to protect the relationship while addressing the sleep problem.

9 Rather than seeing bed-sharing as a test of love, couples might ask what allows both people to feel rested and connected. A relationship is built from communication, trust and everyday care. The location of two pillows is unlikely to tell the whole story.

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. Younger couples are more likely to sleep apart. T F NG
2. The survey in the report came from an American sleep medicine organisation. T F NG
3. The figures prove that separate bedrooms make couples happier. T F NG
4. Some couples cannot sleep in separate rooms. T F NG
5. The text suggests that moving to a bigger home is an easy answer for many families. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

emotional	interrupted	irritable	relieved	successful	underlying	unrealistic	unwell

1. After three nights of broken sleep, she became so _____ that she snapped at her colleagues over small things.
2. She felt _____ when the noisy builders finally left, and she slept well that night.
3. Buying a second home so each partner has a bedroom is _____ for most families.
4. Her son was too _____ to go to school, so she took him to the doctor.
5. For many people, losing a parent is an _____ experience.
6. The rash was only a symptom; the _____ problem was an allergy.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time her partner came to bed, she _____ asleep. (FALL)
2. Earplugs _____ by many couples as a simple solution. (USE)
3. If he wears earplugs tonight, he _____ better. (SLEEP)
4. The couple _____ separate rooms last year and say they feel happier. (CHOOSE)
5. Noise from the street _____ them awake since they moved in. (KEEP)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Many phrasal verbs have a meaning you cannot guess from the parts. Check that the particle matches the whole idea, such as work out for solve.

along	away	back	down	out	over	up

1. After years of broken sleep, they finally worked _____ a routine that suited them both.
2. A warm shower can help people calm _____ before bed.
3. He was afraid to bring _____ the subject of snoring.
4. After a month apart, they decided to go _____ to sharing a room.
5. He hoped the problem would simply go _____ .

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

4 True, false or not given

1 NG · 2 T · 3 F · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 irritable · 2 relieved · 3 unrealistic · 4 unwell · 5 emotional · 6 underlying

6 Verb forms

1 had fallen · 2 are used · 3 will sleep · 4 chose · 5 has kept

7 Language focus

1 out · 2 down · 3 up · 4 back · 5 away

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