

REAL ESTATE

Sleep Awareness Week: How To Create A Stylish And Healthy Bedroom

By [Terri Williams](#), Contributor. © Terri Williams is a journalist covering housing...

[Follow Author](#)

Published Mar 09, 2026, 04:52am EDT, Updated Mar 09, 2026, 05:04am EDT



The right bedroom design can function as a sensory off-switch.
GETTY

Sleep Awareness Week 2026 is March 8 – 14, and it’s the perfect time of the year (especially since we just set the clocks ahead one hour) to talk about ways to improve your sleep experience.

Your bedroom’s design, sleep habits, indoor allergens and pollutants in the bedroom, and several other factors can determine how well you sleep.

“In luxury design, we are moving beyond the aesthetic into the biological,” says John Ballentine, interior designer and owner of [DOMICILIO Interiors](#) in Atlanta. He tells me that a bedroom must function as a sensory off-switch. “By utilizing neuroaesthetics to create visual silence and

introducing tactile grounding through natural fibers, we aren't just decorating; we are engineering a transition zone that nudges the brain from performance mode into deep, restorative recovery."

Below, interior designers and sleep experts provide tips and practical advice to help you create a bedroom that's conducive to sleeping.

6 Science-Based Bedroom Design Principles



Before and after photos.
JOHN BALLENTINE AND FLUX COLLABORATIVE

Establish A Refuge Point For Safety

Ballentine recommends positioning your bed against a solid, dark wall to create a psychological sense of enclosure. If your bed feels too exposed, he explains that the nervous system remains on low-level alert. "A high headboard or a deep-toned anchor wall mimics a cave effect, allowing the body to fully disarm and transition into a restorative state," Ballentine says.

Curate Visual Silence To Lower Brain Fatigue

Your brain will work harder when it has to process high-contrast boundaries. "To create visual silence, aim for a low-contrast palette where your largest elements — like the headboard, window treatments, and the wall behind them — share a similar visual weight or tone," Ballentine says. He explains this will simplify the room's boundaries, and allow the visual cortex to turn off, instead of continuously scanning the edges of the room.

Introduce Nature-Inspired Motion

Subtle, non-rhythmic movement is deeply soothing to the brain. "In environments where a view of nature isn't available, you can mimic this soft fascination by using a low-speed ceiling fan to create a gentle movement in your drapery, or by placing a tall, leafy plant near an air vent," Ballentine recommends. "These subtle visual cues provide enough engagement to prevent racing thoughts without over-stimulating the mind," he says.

Utilize The Power Of Soundscapes

Acoustics are a primary trigger for the nervous system, and Ballentine says the sound of water can reduce stress by up to 60%. “Whether through a dedicated sound machine or a small water feature, introducing consistent, natural soundscapes can act as a biological sedative, masking disruptive city noises and lowering the heart rate for deeper sleep,” he explains.

Layer For Tactile Grounding

Ballentine recommends the use of natural, breathable textures like weighted linen, wool, or organic cotton. “This tactile grounding provides physical weight that anchors a restless mind,” he explains. “When what you touch feels as safe and high-quality as what you see, your brain stops searching for environmental friction and begins to relax.”

Master The Prospect And Refuge Cycle

By installing remote-controlled shades, Ballentine says you can manage your environment without leaving the bed. “This allows for a morning ‘prospect’ view of the outdoors to trigger a healthy cortisol spike for energy, and a total blackout ‘refuge’ at night to initiate melatonin production.” And by managing this light-dark cycle, he says you can re-align your internal biological clock.

Bedroom Examples



Photo courtesy of
720 WEST END AVENUE: PHOTO CREDIT: COLIN MILLER

A soft, tonal palette reduces visual noise, and sticking to closely related hues results in a calm, cocooning feel. In the photo above, Michael Ellison, founder of [Studio Michael Ellison](#), tells me his team used warm whites, soft grays, and muted woods to achieve this effect. “We limited the palette to two or three tones and repeated them across surfaces to create quiet continuity,” he says.

Ellison recommends adding depth through texture and layering — rather than pattern — by incorporating tactile materials like bouclé, linen, wool, and honed stone. “Sculptural pieces with subtle curves introduce richness without creating visual busyness.” His team also focused on grounding, intentional furniture, and lighting. “Low-profile, softly-shaped pieces paired with warm, diffused, dimmable lighting help anchor the space and support rest.” Ellison says a sleep-supportive bedroom should feel edited — not empty, and it should be thoughtful, warm, and deeply calming.



Photo courtesy of
18W55; PHOTO CREDIT YULIA SMILYANETS

When designing a bedroom, our goal is always to create a calm, comfortable space using a soft, tonal palette with nuanced layering,” says Neila Deen, founder of [Urban Casa](#). In the photo above, she tells me that she selected a pale, subtle gray paint color with a hint of warmth to establish a serene foundation. “We also selected hemp wallpaper to introduce texture while complementing the wall color,” she explains, while noting that layers of soft, inviting white boutique hotel bedding also enhance the welcoming aesthetic. “This same approach, beginning with a warm neutral base and thoughtfully layering texture, allows subtle pops of color to add personality and style while still maintaining a warm, restful, and inviting ambiance.” (Check out the [2026 home flooring trends](#): patterned hardwoods and toasty palettes.)



Photo courtesy of
SUTTON TOWER; PHOTO CREDIT: REPN

“If you want a bedroom that truly supports restful sleep, keep it simple, proportional, and intentional, says Pietro Bacchi, co-CEO at [Artefacto Manhattan](#). In the photo above, Bacchi’s team layered organic fabrics and textures to gently ground the space. “We kept the focus on warm neutrals, diffused lighting, and thoughtful proportions, resulting in a quiet, comfortable retreat.” A new report reveals that quiet luxury is out and living large is in, with luxury buyers requesting properties with at least 4 or 5 bedrooms.

Why Sleep Is So Important

Sleep is a biological process that we tend to take for granted. Many of us often stay up late watching TV or scrolling on social media — or we’re working late or cramming for exams. And according to Ruchir P. Patel, MD, at the [TMS Institute of Arizona](#), we’ve grown accustomed to not getting enough sleep.

“Sleep is characterized by four stages: Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3 (deep sleep or slow wave sleep), and REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, which is where we dream,” he tells me. A typical night consists of four to five sleep cycles, each lasting about 90 to 120 minutes. “The first half of the night is dominated by Stage 3 sleep, and in the second half, we spend most of our time in REM sleep, with the longest REM period occurring within the last two hours before we wake,” Patel explains.

It’s in Stage 3 sleep where growth hormone production and immune system regulation occurs, and the body is repairing, resting, and regenerating itself. “It’s also when the brain opens the glymphatic system, essentially a cleansing system that allows brain cells to dump toxins so they can be excreted,” Patel says. And he warns that anything that disrupts Stage 3 sleep — chronic sleep deprivation, but also alcohol, nicotine, or cannabis — can interfere with this brain-cleansing mechanism, and in turn, can increase the risk of a variety of health problems, including memory issues, cognitive dysfunction, dementia, and possibly, Alzheimer’s disease.

Memory formation also occurs while you're sleeping, and short-term memories are consolidated into long-term memories. "There is a bidirectional relationship between sleep and mental health: chronic sleep deprivation, fragmented sleep from untreated sleep apnea, or even certain antidepressants can suppress REM sleep," Patel explains. "Since REM sleep is critical for frontal lobe functioning — where mood regulation, energy, focus, and concentration occur — insufficient REM sleep can heighten anxiety and depression, and also increase activity in the amygdala, triggering irritability."

In addition, Patel says sleep is critical for regeneration in the lungs, liver, heart, and throughout the entire body. "It is truly the period when cells rest, repair, regenerate, and cleanse themselves — functions they simply cannot perform while we're awake and active all day," he explains.

A consistent sleep schedule is also important. Every cell in your body has a circadian rhythm, and Patel says they don't perform their sleep functions just because you're sleeping — they perform them based on the *time* of night. "So, if your liver typically begins its regenerative process at 10 pm and you have a natural bedtime of 9 pm, but on weekends you stay up until 11 pm or midnight, your liver misses its regenerative window on those nights, because you were still awake when it normally activates," Patel explains.

And over time, inconsistent sleep schedules can increase the chances of developing heart disease, depression, obesity, and other chronic conditions. "So, it's not just the *quantity* of sleep that matters — it's also what time your brain is set to sleep and how consistently you follow that schedule every night," Patel says.

Ways To Sleep Better

Since consistency is one of the primary keys to sleeping well, Patel recommends going to bed and waking up at the same time — even on weekends. "Many people don't realize that sleeping in on weekends creates what we call Social Jet Lag, which throws off your circadian rhythm in the same way that traveling across time zones does."

Start winding down around 30 to 60 minutes before you go to bed. Patel recommends that you read, stretch, journal, or engage in breathing exercises. "This signals to the brain that it's time to transition into sleep."

He also recommends keeping your bedroom quiet, dark, and cool (between 60 to 67 degrees F). "Have a comfortable mattress and pillows, and loose, comfortable bed clothing," Patel says.

Regarding stimulants, avoid caffeine within 6 to 8 hours of bedtime, and nicotine within 2 hours of bedtime. "Alcohol is particularly misunderstood — people often use it to fall asleep, but it actually degrades sleep quality by triggering excessive arousals throughout the night." He also warns against heavy meals within 2 to 3 hours of going to bed. "Meals high in carbohydrates and sugar are especially problematic, because they increase the amount of time the brain spends in Stage 2 sleep, which is not restorative," Patel says.

And while exercise helps you sleep, avoid vigorous activity within 2 hours of bedtime.

About those screens: Patel says blue light exposure at night suppresses melatonin and disrupts your circadian rhythm. “If you’re going to watch TV or use a device within 2 hours of bedtime, consider wearing amber-filtered glasses to reduce that exposure.”

Also, Patel recommends only going to bed when you are sleepy — and if you’ve been lying awake for 20 minutes, get up. “This is called Stimulus Control, and it retrains the brain to associate the bed with sleep rather than wakefulness.” He also advises against staying in bed for 9 hours trying to get 7 hours of sleep. “Too much time in bed naturally results in poor sleep efficiency.”

Your goal should be 7 to 9 hours of quality, consistent sleep. “When you treat sleep as the biological priority it truly is, the benefits to your mood, cognitive function, immune system, and long-term health are profound,” Patel says.

Indoor Air Quality In The Bedroom

You spend one-third of your life in our bedroom, and according to Kenneth Mendez, CEO & president of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), the bedroom can have the worst air quality of any room in your home. He tells me that bedrooms may be full of allergens, asthma triggers, scents, and chemicals.

“These triggers may cause a spike in allergy and asthma symptoms (coughing, wheezing, sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion), which may be disruptive to sound, restful sleep,” Mendez explains.

And according to Dr. John McKeon, CEO of Allergy Standards and cofounder of the Asthma & Allergy Friendly Certification Program, other symptoms could include a dry throat, itchy skin, or irritated eyes. “Some individuals report morning headaches or feeling unrested despite adequate sleep duration,” he tells me.

If your symptoms are worse overnight or when you wake up — but improve during the day after leaving the bedroom environment, McKeon says this pattern may indicate that environmental triggers, like dust mite allergens, mold, or chemical irritants may be contributing factors.

McKeon points to five specific factors:

- Accumulated dust mite allergen in bedding and soft furnishings
- Limited airflow leading to elevated carbon dioxide and particle concentration
- Increased indoor humidity from heating systems or poor moisture control
- VOC emissions from cleaning products, laundry detergents, furnishings, or paint
- Reduced filter maintenance in HVAC systems

“Dust and chemical residues can accumulate over winter when homes are sealed. Indoor pollutant levels can, in some cases, be significantly higher than outdoor levels, particularly when ventilation is restricted,” McKeon explains.

Mendez points to dust mites and pet dander as two common allergens that tend to build up in bedrooms. “Pollen may also collect in bedrooms — either coming in through open windows or being brought into the bedroom on clothes, hair, or pets.” He recommends regularly washing sheets, comforters, pillows, and pillowcases in hot water (130 degrees F or more).

“We also recommend not letting your pets sleep in the bedroom, keeping windows closed (especially on days when the pollen count is high), and removing your outer layer of clothes and washing your hair before getting into bed to help remove pollen that may come into contact with your bedding,” Mendez says.

While the AAFA does not recommend specific products, Mendez advises looking for Asthma & Allergy Friendly Certified products when choosing bedding (for example, outer fabrics that blocks allergens, breathable and easily-cleaned materials that contain no chemicals that trigger asthma and allergy systems), as well as air purifiers with a high CADR (clean air delivery rate), and a HEPA filter.

According to McKeon, the optimal indoor humidity range is generally between 40% and 50%. “A dehumidifier may be helpful in damp environments, while a humidifier may be useful in very dry conditions.” However, he says both devices should be independently validated, and carefully maintained to prevent mold growth or microbial contamination.

These are some of the items that can help you create a stylish and comfortable bedroom.



Photo courtesy of
LEESA

The starting point for a comfortable bed is a high-quality mattress. The [Leesa Sapira Hybrid Mattress](#) is made of 1,000 individually-wrapped steel springs that provide edge support, reinforced motion-isolation, and airflow, along with premium support foam layers that respond to movement and provide pressure relief. The cool-knit cover is breathable and moisture-wicking. The mattress provides a medium-firm feel and includes cushioning and bounce.



Photo courtesy of
BROOKLYN BEDDING

If your mattress is still in pretty good shape, this [Brooklyn Bedding Microcoil Mattress Topper](#) can help to revitalize it. The mattress topper has flexible microcoils that contour to your movements, and plush, high-quality foam that resists sagging. The cover is made of cool -to-the-touch fibers to regulate your body temperature.



Photo courtesy of
WOOLROOM

Keep your mattress looking good as new with the [Woolroom Organic Washable Wool Mattress Protector](#). Designed to reduce heat from memory foam and latex mattresses, the mattress topper is also hypoallergenic – making it a good choice for those with allergies – and also resists dust mites, mold, and mildew. The mattress protector is made of washable wool and doesn't contain synthetic materials or fibers. It's also machine washable.

The [Woolroom Deluxe Washable Wool Comforter](#) is also made of washable wool and free from synthetic materials and fibers. The hypoallergenic comforter naturally resists dust mites, mold, and mildew. It's temperature-regulating and adjusts to your body's temperature, so it can keep you warm in the winter and cool in the summer.



Photos courtesy of
COZY EARTH AND LAYLA

Filled with 100% Mulberry silk, the [Cozy Earth Silk Comforter](#) is available in a standard weight for warmer climates and those who get warm when sleeping, and in an extra weight for colder climates or those who tend to get cold when sleeping. The breathable, and moisture-wicking comforter has a 100% viscose from bamboo shell, and includes interior loops to use with duvet covers.

An alternative to a down comforter is the [Layla All-Season Down Alternative Comforter](#), which is made of 100% cotton fabric and ClusterLoft down alternative fill. The 700 fill power comforter is designed to feel like down, but doesn't have the hard feather shafts. The soft, all-season comforter promotes airflow and regulates your temperature while sleeping. The baffle box design prevents clumping, and there are also includes integrated duvet attachments on each of the four corners.



Photos courtesy of
RILEY HOME

Create a luxury hotel vibe with the [Riley Home Naples Dotted Stitch Duvet Cover](#), which was crafted in Portugal from 100% premium combed cotton. The double-needle topstitching detail creates a refined, and elegant look – and the duvet cover has a silky sheen. There are button enclosures at the bottom, and interior corner ties to keep duvets and comforters in place. The

matching [Sheet Set](#) includes a fitted sheet, flat sheet, and 2 pillowcases with side envelope closure.



Photos courtesy of
BROOKLINEN AND COZY EARTH

For a sateen option, the [Brooklinen Luxe Sateen Hardcore Sheet Bundle](#) is luxuriously soft and smooth, and can be used in any season. The bundle includes a duvet cover, fitted sheet, flat sheet, and 4 pillowcases. The duvet cover includes ties for securing duvets and comforters. Color choices include abyss, storm, pebble, oak, slate, sky, Aegean, fresh moss, and more.

The [Cozy Earth Bamboo Duvet Cover Set](#) is made of 100% premium viscose from bamboo for a silky-smooth appearance and feel. It's temperature-regulating to ensure you won't get hot at night. The concealed bottom zip closure contributes to the clean look, and the interior snap closures keep duvets and comforters in place. The matching [Bamboo Sheet Set](#) can fit both regular and deep pocket mattresses (up to 20 inches). Color choices for both include driftwood, light grey, pacific blue, peony, walnut, shore, charcoal – and coming soon: mulberry.



Photos courtesy of
LAYLA AND TEMPUR-PEDIC

These [Layla Kapok Pillows](#) have a memory foam fill that's blended with natural Kapok fibers. The fill is adjustable, so you can add or remove some of the fill for a higher or lower loft. The pillows are soft, supportive, and the removable (zipper) cover is made of 66% polyester, 33% rayon, and 1% spandex. The pillows are available in both a queen and a king size.

If you tend to get hot when sleeping, the [Tempur-Pedic Tempur-Breeze ProHi Pillows](#) use advanced cooling technology. The removable cover is cool to the touch, and the inner material

adapts and contours to your shape to provide comfort and support. The pillows are available in both low-profile and high-profile options, and also in queen and king sizes.



Photo courtesy of
BROOKLINEN AND BROOKLYN BEDDING

These [Layla Kapok Pillows](#) have a memory foam fill that's blended with natural Kapok fibers. The fill is adjustable, so you can add or remove some of the fill for a higher or lower loft. The pillows are soft, supportive, and the removable (zipper) cover is made of 66% polyester, 33% rayon, and 1% spandex. The pillows are available in both a queen and a king size.

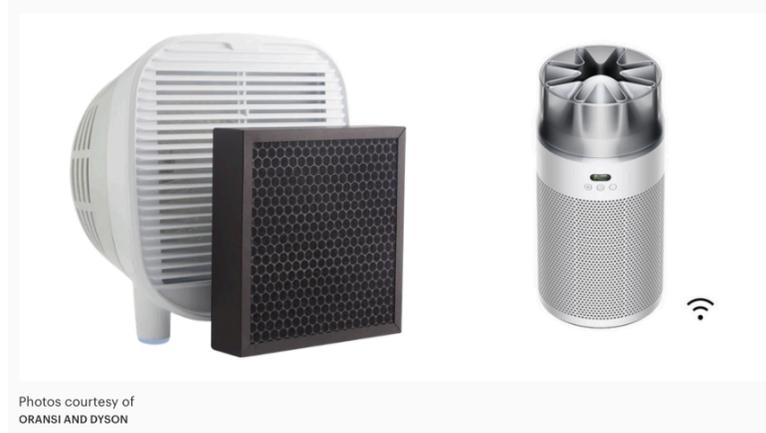
If you tend to get hot when sleeping, the [Tempur-Pedic Tempur-Breeze ProHi Pillows](#) use advanced cooling technology. The removable cover is cool to the touch, and the inner material adapts and contours to your shape to provide comfort and support. The pillows are available in both low-profile and high-profile options, and also in queen and king sizes.



Photo courtesy of
COZY EARTH AND WOOLRUUM

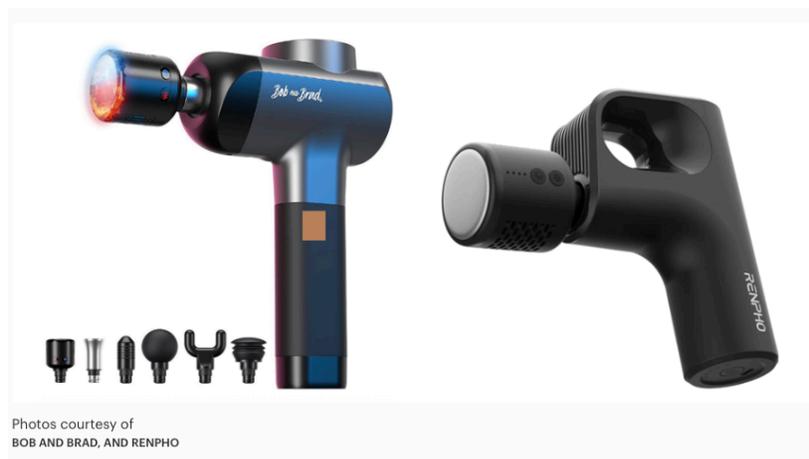
Winter's not over yet, and this [Cozy Earth Extra Weight Cuddle Blanket](#) can keep you warm and toasty when it's cold outside. The faux fur texture is deep and ultra-plush. The blanket is available in medium (60-inch by 50-inch) and large (80-inch by 60-inch) sizes. Color choices include espresso, walnut, dove gray, and cream.

Add color and warmth with the [Woolroom Harlequin Shetland Throw](#). The soft wool throw helps you layer your bedding, and it's also naturally temperature regulating, and 100% renewable. In addition to tutti frutti color shown above, the 55-inch by 73-inch throw is also available in sunshine (which includes lighter hues like yellow, orange, pink, and lime).



The [Oransi TrueCarbon 270C Air Purifier](#) doesn't take up much space, and it's small enough to put on your nightstand or place on the floor. However, it's powerful, and provides heavy duty carbon filtration for smoking neighbors, wildfires, litter boxes and other pet smells, paint fumes, formaldehyde, and other VOCs. It has a remote control and 10 fan speeds.

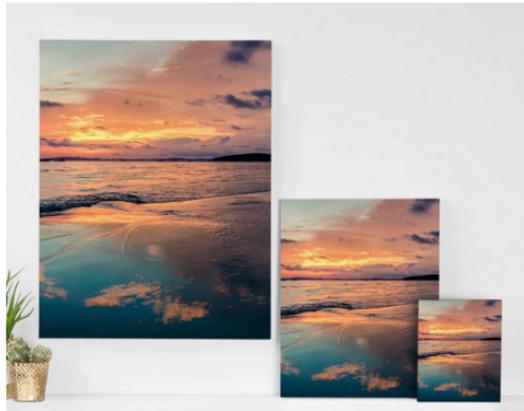
The [Dyson HushJet Purifier](#) is another small format purifier that won't take up much room in your bedroom. It's designed to capture allergens, dust, and pollutants, and the activated carbon filter removes pet odors and VOCs. In auto mode, the sensor detects and reacts to changes in the air quality. The air purifier can be controlled manually or via the app, or using voice services like Amazon Alexa , Google Assistant, or Siri.



It's hard to sleep when you're aching and in pain. The [Bob and Brad X6 Pro Max Massager](#) has a titanium alloy metal massage head design with a 120W brushless motor that deliver up to 55 pounds of force (3200 strokes per minute). The massage gun has both a cold mode and a heat mode, along with 5 adjustable speeds, and can be used on your arms, legs, back, feet, shoulders

– and the whole body. It's also cordless, and uses a 2500mAh Li battery that can last for up to 240 minutes.

For a smaller option, the [Renpho Active Mini Thermocool Massage Gun](#) also has a dual temperature thermacool head with 4 heat and cool levels, and 5 speeds. The massage gun has a 2500mAh battery so it doesn't have to be charged often, and the ergonomic thumb loop grip makes it easy to massage those hard-to-reach areas. The various heads include the heat & cool head, EVA ball head, air cushioning head, bullet head, and U-shaped head.



Photos courtesy of SOCIETY6

The bedroom is the not place for your dramatic artwork. Calming prints can help create an environment that's conducive to sleeping. Some examples are the [Society6 Nantucket Blues Canvas Print](#), and the [Beautiful Summer Beach Sunset Reflection Canvas Print](#). The art prints are available in various sizes and with or without frames.



Photos courtesy of HUGIMALS WORLD

For kids and adults, the [Hugimals World Quinn the Koala](#) weighs 4.5 pounds with evenly-distributed weight. The weighted deep touch pressure is designed to help relieve stress and

anxiety and help users fall asleep. Other Hugimals include Bowie the Panda, Emory the Elephant, Sam the Sloth, Harper the Pig, and more.

For a heavier weighted option, the 10-pound [Hug Pillow](#) is round, and comes in an extra-large size. It also has a pocket for your hands. It's silky on the front pocket side, and velvety plush on the back side. The hug pillow is also available in hug balls, and heart-shaped hug pillows.



Photos courtesy of
GATHERWISE AND ALPYN

Your pre-bed rituals can ensure your body is clean and fresh when it comes into contact with your sheets (note: some products are best used in the morning). The [Gatherwise Starter Bundle](#) is a skin care set that includes a cleaning oil to wash your face and remove make up, hydration toner, calm & clear serum and spot treatment, and facial balm.

Another option is the [Albyn Total Renewal Ritual](#), which is a 5-step complexion kit that includes a hydrating cream cleanser to remove makeup and buildup, pore perfecting liquid – a leave-on exfoliant to clear pore congesting while hydrating and soothing, super sculpt serum, barrier repair cream, and instant bright eye.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/terriwilliams/2026/03/09/sleep-awareness-week-create-the-perfect-stylish-bedroom-for-sleeping/>