

Cognitive Therapy

Many insomniacs have worrisome thoughts around bedtime about their ability to go to sleep, or about the negative consequences of not getting enough sleep. Although we do recognize that insomnia can produce negative consequences, worrying about your sleep can increase arousal and make your insomnia worse.

- Tone down your worrying in the bedroom. Select a time and place unrelated to bedtime and outside of the bedroom to "practice" worrying. For example, go to a designated worry chair for half an hour, about an hour before bedtime and worry hard. Another example is to pick a time and place to write down all your worries, concerns, and plans. This will help cleanse your mind of worries.
- Worrying about not getting enough sleep or any other subject will interfere with getting sleep. Even though what you are worrying about may be a legitimate concern, thinking about it in a negative way at bedtime will only disrupt your sleep further, and it will not solve whatever problem you are dwelling on. Similarly, there is no beneficial use for worrying about your sleep and how you will feel the next day. You have a choice whether to worry or not.
 - Identify your disruptive, negative thoughts
 - Explain to yourself why they are unnecessarily negative.
 - Substitute more moderate, tolerant thoughts that are less disturbing.
- We suggest that when you get into bed, you adopt a relaxed attitude about sleep. This will allow sleep to come on naturally.

The psychological approach to treating insomnia avoids the possibility of unwanted side effects common to sleep medications. The approach we will offer you is based on the knowledge that people sometimes develop behaviors and attitudes about sleep that unintentionally disrupt sleep. The most effective treatment of insomnia is to help people manage their own sleep better.

IF YOU PRACTICE THESE
SEVERAL METHODS,
YOUR REWARD WILL BE
IMPROVED SLEEP

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
Sleep Research Project
Department of Psychology

For more information:

www.sleepresearchproject.ua.edu

- 1) Click on the "research volunteers" link under the menu
- 2) This will take you to the research page where you will have access to information about the research study, the study video, and this brochure

Improve Your Sleep

Help yourself to sleep
better



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Sleep Hygiene

Sleep hygiene identifies everyday behaviors that may help or hurt sleep:

- Avoid caffeine after noon.
 - Caffeine is a potent stimulant found in coffee, tea, and many soft drinks.
- Avoid exercise within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Engage in regular exercise earlier in the day.
 - Exercise taken in the morning or afternoon is healthy and may even promote better sleep.
- Avoid nicotine within 2 hours of bedtime.
 - Like caffeine, the nicotine in cigarettes is a stimulant.
- Avoid alcohol within 2 hours of bedtime.
 - Alcohol taken near bedtime will cause awakenings during the night and will prevent you from feeling well rested in the morning.
- Avoid eating a heavy meal within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Avoid napping.
 - Napping during the day may disrupt sleep at night. If you must nap, keep it short (less than half an hour) and do it early in the day (before 2 pm)

Stimulus Control

This method helps a person break habits that have made the bedroom a wake-promoting place, such as watching TV, thinking about what needs to be done the next day, etc. By doing the above activities, your body associates getting into bed with being awake; this may interfere with sleep. To help break this association:

- Do not use your bed or bedroom for anything (at any time of the day) but sleep (or sex).
- Lie down in bed intending to go to sleep *only when you are very sleepy*. Don't let the clock dictate when you go to bed. Stay up and active until you have a strong urge to sleep.
- Get out of bed if you do not initially fall asleep within 15 to 20 minutes, and go to another room to do a relaxing activity (e.g., reading or watching TV in a dimly lit room). Go back to bed only when you feel extremely sleepy again. Follow this instruction when you are first trying to fall asleep *and* when you wake up in the middle of the night. Get out of bed when you *feel* it has been about 15 to 20 minutes.
- Set your alarm and get up at the same time every morning.

Passive Relaxation

People with insomnia often report difficulty relaxing either physically (such as tension in certain areas of the body) or mentally (not being able to shut off their mind). This relaxation technique is an effective way to reduce physical or mental tension.

This technique should be practiced twice a day, once during the day, and once at bedtime. This technique involves relaxing your body, slow deep breathing, and pleasant imagery. It should last about 10 minutes. Follow along with the tape or CD.

- Remember:
 - It is important to practice daily, as relaxation is a skill and you will improve over time with practice.
 - Mind wandering is a common problem when trying to relax. Do not fight it. Let your mind wander. Maintain a relaxed attitude about trying to relax. In time, mind wandering will be less of a problem.
 - The relaxation method you have been given, is a simple means of feeling more relaxed. It has been well studied, is in common use, and most people find it pleasant.