



Sleep issues can lead to daytime distress

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If you're not sleeping enough it can affect many aspects of your life. Lack of sleep contributes to poor work performance, poor memory, relationship problems, and an increase in mental health concerns.

Insomnia is defined as having a problem initiating and/or maintaining sleep at least three times per week and experiencing daytime distress or impairment.

Individuals with insomnia report longer periods of time required to fall asleep. Sufferers also tend to sleep more lightly, wake up more frequently, and sleep fewer hours.

As Dr. Gregg Jacobs indicates in his book "Say Goodnight to Insomnia," cognitive behavioral therapy interventions have been researched and found effective in treating insomnia without medication.

Have you ever thought: "I must get eight hours of sleep" or "Why does sleep come so easily for everyone but me?"

Such negative sleep-related thoughts lead to negative emotions such as frustration, anxiety, and depression. These negative emotions lead to a stress response which increases your heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, and breathing rate and speeds up your brain waves. This stress response then activates your wakefulness and inhibits the ability to sleep.

A therapist trained in cognitive behavioral therapy can help you challenge negative sleep related thoughts and create more helpful, adaptive thinking.

Try these sleep hygiene tips that

may help combat insomnia:

- Sleep only as much as you need to feel refreshed during the following day. Restrict your time in bed, as excessively long times in bed lead to fragmented and shallow sleep.
- Get up at the same time each day, seven days a week. A regular wake time in the morning leads to regular times of sleep onset and helps to set your "biological clock."
- Exercise regularly. Schedule exercise times so that they do not occur within three hours of when you intend to go to bed.
- Make sure your bedroom is comfortable and free from light and noise.
- Make sure that your bedroom is at a comfortable temperature during the night.
- Eat regular meals and do not go to bed hungry.
- Avoid excessive liquids in the evenings.
- Cut down on all caffeine products. Caffeinated beverages and foods (coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) can cause difficulty falling sleep and cause awakenings. Even caffeine early in the day can disrupt sleep.
- Avoid alcohol. Although alcohol helps tense people fall asleep more easily, it causes awakenings later in the night.
- Smoking may disturb sleep. Nicotine is a stimulant. If you smoke, try to avoid smoking in the evenings.

- Don't take your problems to bed. Plan some time earlier in the evening for working on your problems, as worrying may interfere with initiating sleep and may cause shallow sleep.
- Do not try to fall asleep. This only makes the problem worse. Instead, leave the bedroom and do something different.
- Put the clock under the bed or turn it so you can't see it. Clock watching may lead to frustration and worry.
- Avoid naps. Staying awake during the day helps you fall asleep at night.

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