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HOW TO GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

1. Stop Scheduling Bed-Times-Your body isn't trained to respond to an arbitrary time on the clock and shut itself off as soon as you go to bed. Your body goes to sleep when it's tired. So don't go to bed until you're tired!
2. Schedule a Wind-Down Period-Pick an activity or a number of activities that you find relaxing or sedating and that help you to wind down. You could read a relaxing book, listen to music, watch television (something calming), or take a bath. You can schedule this activity 30 to 60 minutes before you hope to go to bed. Do not go to bed until you feel sleepy. If it's taking a long time, fine. It's good for you. It means more time engaging in relaxing activities. You probably don't relax enough during the day?
3. Stop Worrying About Not Getting Enough Sleep-A poor night's sleep is no big deal. The only harm that can come to you is from chronic or long-term insomnia. Your body was made to handle short-term sleep deprivation. And your body was also made to simply knock out and make up for lost sleep when it's tired enough. If you feel sleepy during the day, involve yourself in an activity that you find engaging and challenging. And start moving: Take a five to ten minute brisk walk. Periods of sleepiness pass with time. So stop worrying and try to relax and enjoy the hours you're stuck awake. It simply means more life. There's a paradox to insomnia: You can't force yourself to sleep. You can only allow it to happen. And you will only allow it to happen if you realize the world won't end because of a poor night's sleep.
4. Bed is for Sleeping-People with insomnia often engage in a number of activities in bed: reading, watching television, eating, etc. If you engage in stimulating activities in bed, the bed will become a stimulating place. If you limit your bed to sleep, you will probably find yourself getting sleepy just by looking at your bed. You're just like Pavlov's dog. There is, however, one activity besides sleep allowed in bed which I think you can figure out yourself.
5. Don't Toss and Turn in Bed!-If you're lying in bed and "trying" to sleep without success, get up after at most 20 minutes. (Don't watch the clock. Just estimate 20 minutes in your mind.) Go into another room and engage in a relaxing or sedating activity. Continue for as long as it takes and don't get back into bed until you feel sleepy. Do this several times if necessary. People with insomnia have "poor sleep efficiency," meaning the amount of time in bed is much greater than the time spent sleeping. Insomnia won't improve unless sleep efficiency improves. So stop the tossing and turning and get up!
6. Establish a Regular Wake-Time-Instead of a regular bedtime, you need a regular wake-time. A regular wake-time will teach your body's biological clock to establish a regular rhythm, so you become tired naturally at night.

Irregular wake times create chaos. Even if you have been deprived of sleep at night, set your alarm for the regular wake-time. Don't make up for lost sleep by sleeping late. If you must, sleep later on weekends, but only a little later.

7. If You're Prone to Insomnia, Don't Nap-Napping throws your biological clock out of rhythm. You won't be tired at night, and the insomnia will continue. When tired, pick an engaging and mentally challenging activity. Try a short bout of physical exercise, like a five to ten minute brisk walk, ideally at 3 PM. Attacks of sleepiness are temporary. They will pass soon, particularly if you're active. And if you plan a busy day for yourself, you may be surprised. You may not get tired at all.

8. Don't Drive If You're Sleepy and don't engage in other activities that involve risk, such as operating heavy machinery or practicing surgery. If you are driving and become drowsy, pull over! (Do not turn the music louder or open the windows. That doesn't work!) Take a nap (no more than 20 minutes) if possible. Take a brisk walk or drink some coffee. Don't drive until you feel awake!

9. Try a Relaxation Exercise When You Get into Bed after your wind-down ritual. You could listen to a relaxation tape. Of all the relaxation exercises, imagery is best for inducing sleep. So close your eyes and create a relaxing mental picture.

10. Plan "Worry Time" During the Day-Sleep is not a time for worrying or solving all the problems of the next day. If you're a nocturnal worrier, place a piece of paper and a pen on your night stand. If you start to worry in bed, write the worry on the paper. Arrange for a scheduled "worry-time" during the day. During worry-time, you should focus your mind on your worry and don't let your mind off the worry. Address the worry with problem-solving, using my problem solving handout.

11. No Banquets Before Bed-What you eat before bed will sit in your belly all night. Grapefruit is a natural sedative. Try one before bed. Or peanut butter on a whole grain cracker. Don't consume caffeine after 5 PM, or six hours before bed.

12. Exercise: Exercise improves sleep. Work out in the morning or early evening.

12. Do Not Make a Habit of Using Sleep Medication-Sleep medications are OK in a crisis. They can get you through a rough week. But they do not solve sleep problems. Sleep medications are habitual, and if you get addicted you will have a serious problem. The only long-term solution for insomnia is behavioral sleep therapy.

13. If All Else Fails, Find a Behavioral Sleep Therapy Specialist-You may need help. Behavioral sleep therapy specialists are trained to use proven treatments, such as "sleep hygiene" and "sleep restriction therapy" which often produce rapid results in cases where the sleep disturbance is more serious.