Supported Self Help Sessions

Difficulty Getting to Sleep

Many people worry about not getting enough sleep, but worrying only makes it worse. So it’s important to keep in mind the following:

- When it comes to sleep, everyone’s needs are different. Some people need more sleep, others manage to function very successfully on less. In general, as you grow older you will require less sleep.
- There is no danger in having a few restless nights. People often mistakenly think that lack of sleep will make them ill.
- If you’re encountering any sleeping difficulties, it’s very easy to overestimate how long it takes to get to sleep and underestimate how much sleep you get.
- If you allow it to, and avoid too many late nights followed by early mornings, your body is pretty good at getting all the sleep that it needs.

Hints for Getting a Good Night’s Sleep

Establish a bedtime routine to prepare your mind and body for sleep.

- Turn off computer screens or mobile devices in good time before going to bed. Staring at the light of these screens will make your body react as though it was already morning.
- Stop working and take time to relax by having a warm bath, turning down the lights, listening to restful music, or doing a relaxation exercise.
- Avoid big meals and caffeine in the few hours before you retire, but don’t go to bed hungry. Some people find a milky drink before bed helpful.
- Go to bed only when you are sleepy; do not try to get more sleep by going to bed early.
- Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark and your bed is as comfortable.
- Turn the clock face away so you cannot see what time it is.
- When you are in bed, relax and do not think about worrying issues. If there is a problem, identify all your worrying thoughts by writing them down on a piece of paper earlier in the evening, and put that piece of paper away in a drawer. If you are still worrying write down your worries, and then again turn your mind to more pleasant things.

Use your bed only for sleeping.

- Do not read, watch television or eat in bed unless you are sure by your past experience that these activities help you to sleep.
- If you have not fallen asleep in about 15 to 20 minutes, or if you wake up and cannot get back to sleep, don’t lie in bed tossing and turning. Go to a different room if you can and do something else that doesn’t require too much mental or physical effort. Return to bed only when you feel sleepy.

Stay active during the day

- Set an alarm and get up at the same time each morning regardless of how much sleep you received during the night. This will help your body maintain its own natural sleep pattern. If you haven’t slept well during the night you will sleep better the night after. You can’t make yourself sleep, but you can make yourself wake up in the morning.
- Avoid catnaps during the day.
- Get some moderate exercise on a regular basis during the day, such as swimming or walking, but don’t do vigorous exercise too close to bedtime as it may keep you awake.

You can find more information at http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/sleepingwell.aspx

Remember, if it doesn’t get better in a few weeks, think about registering with us again, for an appointment with a counsellor http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling/register, you’d be very welcome.