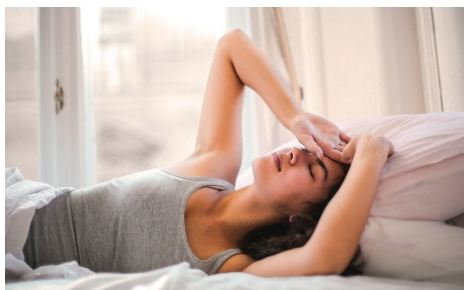


Can't Sleep? These Tips May Help

You lie in bed, tossing and turning, checking the clock – AGAIN. You groan. So late! You've heard a million times how important sleep is and you want to be alert (and not feel sleep-deprived) for that meeting tomorrow. You sigh with frustration - a familiar feeling – so familiar that you've begun to dread going to bed at night, assured that it will be a night filled with frustration as you try and try to fall asleep.

Sound familiar?

If you're having difficulty sleeping, these tips may help:



1. BE CONSISTENT.

Try to go to bed at the same time every night. Going to bed at the same time each night and getting up at the same time each day helps the brain's sleep-wake signals and trains the brain to fall asleep on schedule.

2. AVOID NAPS.

To get in a good sleeping routine, it's important to STAY AWAKE during the day. Although naps are tempting when you feel so tired and sleepy from a restless night, they confuse the brain's sleep-wake cycle. Carrying those tired, sleepy feelings to bedtime will help you to fall asleep more readily and begin the process of training your brain to sleep at night.



3. CLEAR YOUR BED.

It's important that your bed becomes associated with SLEEPING – period. Keep the bed free from all activities other than sleeping. Have a separate work and play space apart from your bed. Watch television, check social media, play game systems, pay bills ... anywhere but on your bed.

4. GET COMFORTABLE.

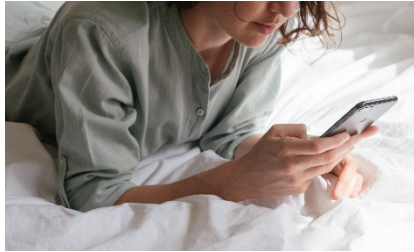
Prepare a comfortable sleeping environment. Make sure your bed and mattress are comfortable and that you wear comfortable clothing. Adjusting the thermostat is also important. Although most people sleep better when it is cooler, you won't sleep well if you feel too cold OR too hot.

5. LIMIT CAFFEINE.

Drink caffeinated beverages in limited quantities and stop their consumption several hours before bedtime, along with exercise, nicotine and alcohol, which can also interfere with sleep.

6. UNWIND AN HOUR BEFORE BEDTIME.

Your brain needs time to transition from “think/ process/ actively engage” mode to “sleep” mode. Prepare your brain for sleep by putting away any stimulating activity, including work and social media an hour before bedtime. Spend the last hour before bed in passive activities that don’t require a lot of active thinking, attending and engaging. Activities like watching television or reading an enjoyable book can help to calm the brain and prepare it for sleep.



7. TURN OFF DEVICES.

At least an hour before bedtime, shut off all electronic devices. Keep electronic devices away from the bed. The blue light in devices interferes with the release of melatonin, the brain’s sleepy hormone, preventing you from falling asleep.

8. AVOID OVER-THE-COUNTER SLEEP-AIDS.

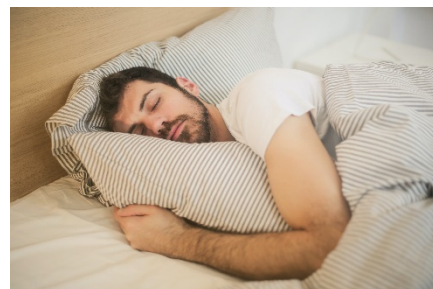
Use of over-the-counter sleep aids and even prescribed sleep medications tends to be counter-productive in the long run. Their use is often addictive and tends to interfere with REM sleep, which is felt to be important for mental and physical health. Following the tips noted, particularly in conjunction with psychotherapy, has been shown to be more effective.

9. OVERCOME PATTERNS THAT REINFORCE DISTURBED SLEEP

Over time, we can begin to dread going to bed, anticipating that we will have trouble falling or staying asleep. These feelings promote anxiety that make it even more difficult to fall asleep, perpetuating the pattern of disturbed sleep. A psychologist can work with you to help you overcome this sense of anxiety, but activities you can do to help include sleeping only in the bed and getting up and leaving the room if you can’t sleep and returning only when sleepy.

10. RELAX.

Progressive muscle relaxation and deep breathing techniques can reduce muscle tension and help in producing the relaxation response, leading to better sleep. Meditation has also been shown to help in sleeping.



If you’d like to talk to a psychologist about your sleeping difficulty, Dr. Gordon is available to help. Contact us at 512-496-5947 or sgordon@calmpsychoanalyst.com.

