

1. RETRAINING YOUR SLEEPING

1. Don't go to bed until you feel sleepy, no matter what time it is.
2. Use your bed for sleep so do not read, eat, drink, watch TV, listen to radio etc. Put the light straight out and try to sleep. Sexual activity is the only exception to this.
3. If you don't fall asleep within 30 minutes, get up and engage in some relaxing activity. Don't eat or drink anything. Stay there until you feel tired again no matter how long this takes.
4. If you don't go off to sleep within 30 minutes, repeat point 3 again (and again if necessary). Count on being up and down a lot during the first few nights.
5. Keep going with this therapy. Even if you have hardly slept the previous night, go through the same steps the next time.
6. As with all other techniques, keep a diary of your progress.

2. SLEEPING TIPS

- Exercise during the day, preferably in the late afternoon before dinner. Aerobic exercise is best, but brisk walking will suffice.
- Make sure you get up early each morning, irrespective of how much sleep you have had. This will get your body into a good sleep rhythm again.
- Do not sleep or snooze during the day. Save your tiredness for night-time.
- Avoid heavy meals before bedtime, or going to bed hungry (a small snack before bedtime may be helpful).
- Relax as much as possible before going to bed – wind down during the last hour or two of the day. Have a bath, listen to music, play a relaxation tape. Don't go to bed straight from a task which has required a lot of concentration – you may be too alert.
- Keep your room temperature between 60 – 70 degrees. Too warm or cold a room tends to interfere with sleep.
- Reduce noise through the use of ear plugs.
- If your sleeping partner is restless or snores, sleep in separate rooms until you get the problem under control.
- Reduce caffeine consumption as much as possible. Caffeine can still effect you up to six hours after being ingested. If you must have coffee, have it only in the morning.
- Cut down smoking. Nicotine, like caffeine, stimulates the central nervous system (CNS). Don't smoke near bedtime. Never smoke in bed.
- Alcohol depresses the CNS and some people rely on it to get off to sleep. This is a dangerous practice: alcohol disrupts sleeping rhythms, cuts down on deep sleep and is likely to wake you during the night.
- Milk drinks, such as *Horlicks* or *Ovaltine*, and warm milk do help you to sleep! Don't drink too much before bed as you may wake to urinate in the night.

Don't be afraid of insomnia. Accept those nights when you don't sleep well. You can still function the next day even if you have only had a couple of hours of sleep. The less you fight, resist or fear sleeplessness, the more it will tend to go away.

Adapted from:

Managing Anxiety, compiled by Geoff Tomlinson (Cornwall Mental Health Forums)

The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook by Edmund J Bourne (New Harbinger Publications Inc, 1995)

Controlling your sleeping problems

