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SLEEP GUIDELINES

The following sleep guidelines are for educational purposes. If you are seriously having trouble with sleep, please consult a medical professional.

SLEEP HYGIENE	
<p>BE REGULAR. Go to bed and wake up at the same time for at least six days a week. Waking up at the same time and getting out of bed upon awakening, no snooze button, will do wonders to create regular sleep.</p>	<p>NO NAPS. It's best to avoid naps. If you do nap during the day, nap before 3 pm if possible for a maximum of 20 to 60 minutes.</p>
<p>SLEEP WHEN SLEEPY. By going to sleep when you feel sleepy, you create a natural rhythm to your sleep habits. Get out of bed if not asleep within 15 minutes. Do something outside of the bedroom in low indirect light and not involving a lit screen like your computer or smartphone, until you feel sleepy, then try going back to bed.</p>	<p>SLEEP RITUALS. Develop your own pattern of sleep rituals before you go to bed. This reminds your brain that it is time to go to sleep. For optimal sleep, include no blue lights from screen devices in the 2-3 hours before you plan to fall asleep. Also, no stressful conversations after 8 pm at night.</p>
<p>BED FOR SLEEP. Use the bed only for sleep or sex. By doing this, you can deepen your sleep and train your sleep patterns.</p>	<p>BATH OR SHOWER. Having a hot bath with epsom salts and magnesium salts before bed can lead to a deeper sleep. A hot shower can do this also. Both cause you to feel sleepy when your body temperature drops again.</p>
<p>AVOID STIMULANTS. Avoid caffeine or nicotine at least 6 hours before falling asleep. If sleep problems are strong, then do not have caffeine after 12 noon. Some people are slow caffeine metabolizers so need to stop drinking caffeine all together.</p>	<p>NO CLOCK WATCHING. Clock watching tends to increase worries about sleep. Avoid watching the clock, even move the clock out of the bedroom.</p>
<p>AVOID ALCOHOL. Alcohol seriously disrupts your sleep architecture. By not drinking alcohol in your day, you reach a deeper level of sleep and are able to gradually restore your sleep architecture over months.</p>	<p>EXERCISE. Exercise daily to balance your body's hormones and neurotransmitters. Exercising in the morning instead of the afternoon can increase sleep as sometimes evening activity leads to increased adrenaline.</p>
<p>STRUCTURE. Structure your space and time. By keeping structure to your space, ie keeping your bedroom clean, tidy, low in noise, and mainly for sleeping, you enhance sleep. By keeping a structure to your day, you reduce disruptions that can cause stress and decrease sleep.</p>	<p>EAT HEALTHY. Eat foods rich in serotonin that may help you sleep at dinner time. Keep dinner light. Consider almonds, turkey, potatoes, yams, chamomile tea, kiwi, tart cherry juice, walnuts, fatty fish, cold white rice, and other tryptophan rich foods.</p>



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SLEEP STIMULUS CONTROL

Step 1. Keep your bedroom only for sleep or sexual intimacy. Do not use your bedroom for activities such as watching TV, eating, smoking, working, playing computer games, talking on your mobile phone, Sudoku, or having conversations in the evening.

Step 2. Wake up and get out of bed at the same time each morning and try to get into the sun or other bright light. This includes weekends even when you may stay up later than usual. Choose a consistent wake up time that suits your usual circumstances and stick to it.

Step 3. Go to bed at night only when you feel sleepy, not because you may feel fatigued or exhausted or because of a standard routine. Going to bed before you are sleepy or drowsy is likely to result in a long period of wakefulness in bed.

Step 4. If, after going to bed and turning out the light, you do not fall asleep in a reasonably short period of time (approximately 15 minutes) get out of bed, go to another room and do something relaxing. When you feel sleepy again, go back to bed and give your brain another chance to fall asleep. You should not try hard to fall asleep, as this will only raise your alertness and prevent sleep. Try to relax, and allow sleep to happen.

Step 5. If again you do not fall asleep within about a quarter hour, repeat Step 4. Continue this process until you fall asleep quickly.

Step 6. Do not nap during the day even after a night of little sleep.

Step 7. Follow the program strictly for several weeks to establish a regular and organized pattern.

Why Sleep Well. The reason that sleep is so important is several fold. First, sleeping for less than 5 hours a night for two weeks results in cognitive impairment equal to that of a drunk driver and can equally cause a motor vehicle accident. You are not invincible. You need sleep. Second, your sleep patterns have an "architecture", a way that the movements of the brain cell rhythms occur throughout the night, and this pattern is key in restoring your mind, mood, and energy. Third, attaining a deep sleep is important to allow astrocytes in the brain to "clean" the brain in your sleep. Your brain cells produce waste material in the brain when they fire, and this waste material needs to be cleaned out by astrocytes removing it and taking it to the blood and then to leave the body through detoxification in the liver. Fourth, you have specialized cells in your retina, "melanopsin cells" that detect light and tell the brain what hormones and neurotransmitters to produce. By going to bed when it is getting dark outside, and being awake when it is getting light - adjusting as needed depending on your geographic location - you entrain circadian rhythms to produce a healthier balance of neurotransmitters and neurohormones. Studies are now showing that when you lose sleep, and lose the astrocyte action, you may put yourself at greater risk for dementia.