

Suggestions for a new approach to waking and sleeplessness

Overview

Sleep is a really important physiological and psychological component of our sense of wellbeing.

Most sleep problems resolve themselves within three months or so, however long-term sleep deprivation can aggravate blood glucose levels and increase the likelihood of further health complications. It is important to note that this is not true for everyone, and that sleep is not a 'one size fits all', but improving sleep can improve our ability to self-manage Diabetes and overall health.

We know that worrying about not sleeping can actually wake up our minds more, so it can be useful to adopt a position of **acceptance**. This is not resigning yourself to poor sleep, instead working with how it is, continuing to do what is important to you, and letting go of the struggle to get to sleep. This can help reduce our sense of frustration about the impact of poor sleep, as well as quietening our minds from worrying about our wakefulness, to make sleep more likely.

Trust that although 'good sleep' may be inconsistent, we are **programmed to sleep**.

Like the ebb and flow of the tide, we wake, we sleep... However we can work with our Sleep Drive, avoid sleep debt, and ensure that the bases are covered so that sleep is more likely.

We can **lay good foundations** for sleep, but it is not about how much or how little effort we

Better sleep... the Acceptance & Commitment Therapy approach

Setting the scene	It makes sense to be comfortable Consider light levels, temperature, noise... don't just make your bed, make an environment that is conducive to sleep <hr/> A time to plan ... and a time to sleep To reduce a busy mind before getting into bed, set time aside to note down anything important - give yourself permission to let go, by writing down tomorrow's To-Do list
Don't <i>try</i> to relax	<i>Trying to do something, is a striving and driving action</i>

	<p>You may feel relaxed and still experience sleeplessness, or you might struggle to relax on cue... Being relaxed <i>can</i> help sleep, but the trying can sometimes undo efforts</p> <hr/> <p>... notice instead... bring in a little mindfulness</p> <p>Allow your mind to step out of Doing mode and into Being mode, so that you are focusing on the present, whatever is there.</p> <p>Listen to a mindfulness audio for sleep, or follow the ‘Beditation’ meditation by NHS Every Mind Matters and other sleep meditations at Every Mind Matters</p>
<p>Observe where your mind goes</p>	<p>Not getting a wink of sleep, or your day being written off if you wake up, are <i>worries</i> rather than <i>predictions</i></p> <p>Bring to mind the times when you have had poor sleep before...</p> <p>How awful was it, did you manage? Is poor sleep always the same experience...? How do such thoughts contribute towards sleeping tonight?</p> <p>Notice if you bring thoughts from recent non-sleep experiences to tonight’s sleep.</p> <p>Ponder on thoughts that sleep is <i>always</i> poor, every night is a bad night etc... see these as unhelpful predictions, and let them drift away like clouds in the sky.</p> <hr/> <p>Notice <u>how</u> you’re thinking, rather than getting into the nitty-gritty of <u>what</u> you are thinking, as this could activate your internal threat detection system - which will increase alertness and push back sleep signals</p> <p>“I can see I am having that thought again that I won’t sleep”</p> <p>“My mind is telling me I will be too tired to function tomorrow”</p> <p>“ I am noticing those thoughts about not sleeping”</p>
<p>Fill the space... but be busy at the right time</p>	<p>Don’t wake the mind more</p> <p>Lying awake thinking about sleeplessness isn’t effective, but nor is doom-scrolling, watching interesting or exciting TV, doing paperwork etc. Choose boring tasks such as pairing socks, or repetitive tasks like knitting, watch an old familiar movie if you must watch TV (o surprises), or listen to a gentle song on repeat. Check out bedtime stories for insomnia, designed to be monotone and dull!</p> <hr/>

	<p>Do what matters in the daytime</p> <p>Don't avoid activities in case they hinder sleep; not engaging with things that matter to you will increase your resentment and frustration about sleep problems.</p> <p>Having enjoyment, purpose and fun will help use up the hormones that give us Oomph when we wake, and less preoccupation with insomnia will increase the potential for better sleep.</p>
<p>Be patient and non-judgemental about your sleep</p>	<p>Acknowledge that sometimes you will sleep and sometimes you will not.</p> <p>Sleep is not only different for different people, but it is different across our life stages and can be impacted by a number of factors - not all of which are in our control.</p> <p>It is recommended that we do what we can to improve sleep, but let go of the struggle if our sleep patterns are problematic.</p> <p>Perhaps set yourself a target date for review, to see if sleep does change and improve - and if not, and your ability to function day-to-day is being hindered by poor sleep, it may be time to seek more support (<i>see below</i>)</p>

Getting further support

You are invited to try the suggestions here, but if your sleep problems are impairing your ability to function, you are advised to seek further support.

Similarly, should symptoms persist for more than three months, it may be helpful to explore additional input to help reset your body clock:

- Try [Sleepio](#), an online CBT-based app designed to improve sleep problems
- Go to NHS Inform to access a self-help resource to download or work through online [Sleep problems and insomnia self-help guide | NHS inform](#)
- Speak with your GP to see what resources and services exist in your area