

## Session 5

# Bedtime Relaxation Techniques and Lifestyle Practices for Improving Sleep



## Lesson 1: Relaxation Techniques at Night and Lifestyle Practices That Improve Sleep

### Using Relaxation Techniques to Aid Sleep



If you practiced your relaxation techniques consistently each the day for the past week, you are ready to begin using them at bedtime or if you wake up during the night and do not quickly fall back to sleep:

1. At bedtime, or after a nighttime awakening, use the techniques in bed. You can use the relaxation MP3 that came with this program in bed to help you fall asleep.
2. Be patient and do not expect the relaxation techniques to induce sleep every night. If the techniques do not help you fall asleep or back to sleep within 20 to 30 minutes, follow the stimulus control guidelines: get out of bed and engage in a relaxing activity until you are drowsy, then return to bed and try the relaxation techniques again. Repeat this process until you are asleep.
3. If, after a few weeks of practice, the relaxation techniques do not seem to induce sleep, you should stop practicing them in bed. Otherwise, they may become associated with frustration.

### Lesson 2: Lifestyle Practices That Can Improve Sleep

In addition to using relaxation techniques, certain lifestyle practices can improve your sleep. These include:

- Limiting the use of alcohol and caffeine
- Increasing your exposure to bright light
- Creating a sleep environment that is dark, cool, and quiet
- Exercising three to six hours before bedtime

## Lesson 2: Alcohol and Caffeine Disturb Sleep

### Caffeine



If you drink caffeine, keep several guidelines in mind. First, the following substances contain caffeine:

- Soft drinks such as Mountain Dew
- Cocoa
- Chocolate ice cream
- Chocolate candy
- Pain relievers such as Anacin and Excedrin

Second, caffeine is a stimulant. It speeds up brain waves and increases heart rate and blood pressure. It also promotes alertness and reduces fatigue. This can last for six or more hours, so avoid caffeine after lunchtime. If consumed in large enough quantities, caffeine can also lead to dependency and withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, anxiety, irritability, and insomnia.

## Alcohol



What about alcohol use? It can disturb sleep so keep these things in mind:

- It makes sleep lighter and more fragmented by suppressing deep sleep.
- It produces mild withdrawal symptoms that cause sleep to become interrupted, shortened, and fragmented. These disruptions result in lighter sleep and more awakenings, particularly in the early morning.
- Alcohol in combination with sleeping pills is dangerous and potentially fatal.
- It takes about two hours to metabolize one ounce of alcohol. This means that a glass of wine with dinner will probably not affect sleep. However, one ounce of alcohol within two hours of bedtime or more than one ounce after dinner probably will disrupt sleep. Therefore, limit alcohol to one drink at least two hours before bedtime.

## Lesson 3: Sunlight and Sleep



### The Sunlight- Sleep Connection

Sleep and body temperature are directly influenced by the effect of the daily cycles of light and darkness on melatonin, a naturally occurring hormone found in the brain:

- When sunlight enters the eyes, melatonin levels decrease, which signals body temperature to rise and promotes wakefulness.
- Darkness causes melatonin levels to rise and body temperature to fall, which promotes sleep.

Individuals who experience sleep-onset insomnia often have a body temperature rhythm that falls too late at night. Increasing exposure to early morning bright light can make it easier to fall asleep by causing the body temperature rhythm to rise earlier and fall earlier. In contrast, individuals who experience early morning awakenings often have a body temperature rhythm that rises too early in the morning. Increasing exposure to evening bright light can minimize early morning awakenings by delaying the rise in the body temperature rhythm.

### Getting More Sunlight

Here are some simple techniques for increasing exposure to morning sunlight:

- opening the drapes immediately upon awakening
- eating breakfast or reading the newspaper near a sun-exposed window
- taking an early morning walk

Here are some simple techniques for increasing exposure to late day sunlight:

- taking a late day walk
- sitting near a sun-exposed window the hour before sunset

## Lesson 4: Creating An Optimal Sleep Environment



### A Cool Bedroom Aids Sleep

Sleeping in a warm room makes it harder for your body temperature to fall. This makes it more difficult to fall asleep and, because deep sleep will also be reduced, nighttime awakenings will be more likely to occur. Therefore, you should keep the bedroom cool by:

- turning the heat down
- leaving a window open
- using a fan or air conditioner

### Minimize Bedroom Noise

You should also make sure your bedroom is quiet by:

- using earplugs
- closing the window if there is noise outside
- creating “white noise” through the hum of a fan, air conditioner, or a commercially available sound conditioner
- Listening to music or the television at bedtime helps some people fall asleep. However, a timer should be used so that the music or television turns off after about 30 minutes. Otherwise, one is more likely to wake up during the night because sound prevents us from entering deep sleep.

### A Dark Bedroom Aids Sleep

The bedroom should be kept dark by using:

- drapes
- heavy shades
- an eyeshade if necessary

### **A Comfortable Bedroom Aids Sleep**

The bedroom should be kept comfortable by using:

- a comfortable mattress
- comfortable bedding and pillows
- comfortable nightwear

### **Avoid Blue Light Before Bedtime**

Electronic devices such as computers, tablets, and cell phones emit blue light. This wavelength in the light spectrum suppresses melatonin. If these devices are used before bedtime, the suppression of melatonin may disrupt sleep. Avoid these devices several hours before bedtime. Televisions also emit blue light but they will not suppress melatonin because they are too far away from the eyes.

## Lesson 5: Exercise



### Exercise as a Sleep Aid

Exercise can improve your sleep in the following ways:

- It produces a significant rise in body temperature that is followed by a drop in body temperature a few hours later.
- The drop in body temperature, which lasts for two to four hours after exercise, makes it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- This beneficial effect of exercise on sleep is greatest when exercise occurs within three to six hours of bedtime.
- Exercising closer than three hours to bedtime, however, can make it more difficult to fall asleep for body temperature may then be too elevated near bedtime.

### Exercise Later in the Day

If you are already exercising, try exercising later in the day and see if this improves your sleep. If you are not exercising, try exercising - which can simply involve brisk walking - in the late afternoon or early evening three or more days this week. Note whether you sleep better on these days. If you do, make exercise a regular lifestyle practice for improving your sleep.

Other suggestions for exercise include:

- Yard work or mowing the lawn
- Pushing a stroller
- Mall walking
- Bicycling
- Golf or tennis
- Hiking or dancing
- Running outside or on a treadmill, etc.



## Lesson 6: Week #5 Goals



### In addition to your goals for the prior weeks:

Your goals this week are to:

- Begin practicing the relaxation techniques at bedtime or during the night.
- Begin practicing the lifestyle goals that we just reviewed if you are not already practicing them regularly.
- When you have completed all seven nights on your sleep diary, e-mail it to Dr. Jacobs to receive your individualized sleep scheduling guidelines.

### Tips for meeting these goals:

#### **To help you practice relaxation techniques to fall asleep:**

- ✓ Remind yourself that the more you practice relaxation techniques, the better you will get at using them to fall asleep.

#### **To help you practice lifestyle habits that improve sleep:**

- ✓ View these habits as something that can improve not only your sleep but your mood and health.

## Lesson 7: Conclusion of This Program



### **Congratulations**

By now, you should be sleeping better. As you continue to use all of the techniques you learned in this program, keep the following final guidelines in mind:

- Your sleep will likely continue to improve as you use these techniques. Because insomnia has been a long-term problem for many people, the maximum improvement in sleep may not occur in just five weeks.
- Research consistently shows that improvement following CBT techniques for insomnia is well-maintained in the majority of people long-term (several years).
- You can return to this program any time to refresh yourself on any or all of the techniques in this program.

### **If Your Sleep Has Not Improved**

If your sleep has not improved, you may not be practicing the techniques consistently. Make sure you continue to work on the techniques.

If you are still having significant problems sleeping despite consistent use of the techniques in this program, you should consider consulting with a sleep disorders center to rule out any underlying sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, or consulting with a CBT for insomnia specialist if one is available at a sleep clinic. You should also consider an evaluation for depression, anxiety, or other mental health problems by a mental health professional.