

RAY LIGHTSTONE, PSY.D.
ANXIETY & STRESS RELIEF
9 RAILROAD WAY
LARCHMONT, NY 10538
(914) 261-4389 (516) 596-9150
www.anxietyandstressrelief.net

HOW TO GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

1. Stop Scheduling Bed-Times-Your body isn't programmed to respond to an arbitrary time on the clock and shut itself off as soon as you go to bed. Your body goes to sleep when it's tired. So don't go to bed until you're tired!
2. Schedule a Wind-Down Period-Pick an activity that you find relaxing or sedating and that helps you to wind down. You could read a relaxing book, listen to music or take a bath. You can schedule this activity 30 to 60 minutes before you *hope* to go to bed.
3. Establish a Regular Wake-Time-Instead of a regular bedtime; you need a regular wake-time. A consistent wake-time will teach your body's internal clock to establish a rhythm, so you become tired naturally at night.
4. Don't Worry About A Bad Night of Sleep -A poor night's sleep is no big deal. The only harm that can come to you is from chronic or long-term sleeplessness. Your body was made to handle short-term sleep deprivation. And your body was also made to simply conk out and make up for lost sleep when it's tired enough. If you feel sleepy during the day, involve yourself in an activity that you find engaging and challenging. And start moving. A five to ten minute brisk walk is ideal. Periods of sleepiness pass with time. Try to relax and enjoy the hours you're stuck awake. It means more time for living.
5. Bed is for Sleeping-People with insomnia often engage in a number of activities in bed: reading, watching television, eating, etc. If you engage in stimulating activities in bed, the bed will become a stimulating place. If you limit your bed to sleep, you will probably find yourself getting sleepy just by looking at your bed.
6. Don't Toss and Turn in Bed!-If you're lying in bed and "trying" to sleep without success, get up after 20 minutes. (Don't watch the clock. Just estimate.) Go into another room and do something relaxing. Don't go back into bed until you feel sleepy.
7. If You're Prone to Insomnia, Don't Nap-Napping throws your biological clock out of rhythm. You won't be tired at night, and the insomnia will continue. Attacks of sleepiness are usually temporary. They will pass soon, particularly if you're active. And if you plan a busy day for yourself, you may be surprised. You may not get tired at all.

8. Don't Drive If You're Sleepy and don't engage in other activities that involve risk, such as operating heavy machinery or practicing surgery. If you are driving and your eyes get heavy, pull over! (Do not turn the music louder or open the windows. That doesn't work!) Take a nap if possible. Yes, this is one time you can nap, ideally for less than 20 minutes. Take a brisk walk or drink some coffee. Don't drive until you feel awake!

9. Try a Relaxation Exercise When You Get into Bed after your wind-down ritual. You could listen to a relaxation CD at the start, until you can perform the exercise on your own.

10. Don't Worry in Bed-Sleep is not a time for worrying or solving all the problems of the next day. If you're a bedtime worrier and can't get your worries out of your head, get up and do something calming. The thoughts will usually dissipate after you're up. Don't go back to bed until you're sleepy. Pick a time for addressing your worries during the day.

11. No Banquets Before Bed-What you eat before bed will sit in your belly all night. A small snack in the evening is better. Don't consume caffeine after 2 PM. Avoid alcohol and all stimulant drugs before bed.

12. Exercise: Exercise improves sleep. Work out in the morning or early evening.

12. Do Not Make a Habit of Using Over-The-Counter Sleep Medication-Sleep medications are OK in a crisis. They can get you through a rough week. But they do not solve sleep problems. Sleep medications have side effects and are addictive. The only long-term solution for insomnia is behavioral sleep therapy.

13. Read a Self-help Book: Two good books for children are: Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems by Richard Ferber, M.D. And Let's Talk About When You Have Trouble Going to Sleep (The Let's Talk Library) by Susan Kent.

14. Visit These Web Sites:
www.Sleepfoundation.org
www.aasmnet.org/
www.familysleep.com/
www.iacsc.com/

15. If All Else Fails, Find a Behavioral Sleep Therapy Specialist-You may need help. Behavioral sleep therapy specialists are trained to use proven treatments which may be necessary if your sleep disturbance is more serious.