

# Getting Better Sleep

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# Overview

- What happens when we sleep and why it is so important
- The physiology of sleep and an explanation of insomnia
- Cognitive and behavioral strategies that can positively affect sleep

# Why do we need sleep?

- Slower reaction times (accidents more common)
- Impaired speech
- Reduced memory, ability to concentrate, & make decisions
- Increased irritability, anxiety, & depression
- Reduced immune system functioning & can speed up aging process



# The Physiology of Sleep

## Sleep drive

- As you are awake, your sleep drive goes up and goes down as you sleep

## Circadian rhythm (internal body clock)

- Impacts endocrine and nervous systems and core body temperature
- Based on exposure to light

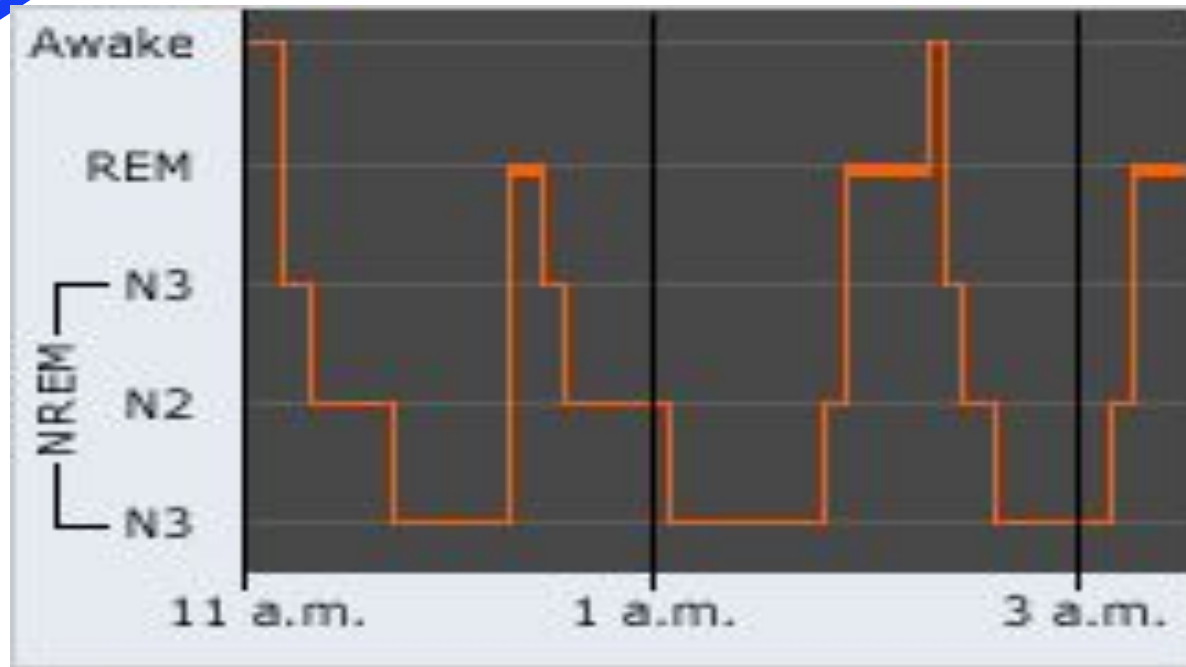
# What happens when we sleep?

## NREM

- Stage 1: Light sleep; body beginning to relax; easily awakened
- Stage 2: Moderately light sleep; somewhat easily awakened; heart rate slows; body temperature drops
- Stages 3 & 4: Deep, restorative sleep; physical rejuvenation

## REM

- Vivid dreaming; brain is active but muscles are paralyzed; mental rejuvenation (learning and memory processing)



Source: Harvard Medical School ([www.healthysleep.med.harvard.edu](http://www.healthysleep.med.harvard.edu))

# Sleep Difficulties

- Sleep onset
- Nocturnal wakings
- Waking earlier than desired
- Difficulties falling back asleep



# The 3P Model of Insomnia

## Predisposing factors

- Factors out of our control (age, genetics, etc.)
- Present before sleep difficulties developed

## Precipitating factors

- Circumstances that trigger insomnia (stress, trauma, medical conditions, etc.)

## Perpetuating factors

- Thoughts/behaviors about/around sleep



# Strategies

## Behavioral strategies

- Stimulus Control
- Sleep Restriction
- Sleep Hygiene

## Cognitive strategies

- Cognitive restructuring
- Worry time
- Mindfulness



# Sleep Log

- Guides pace and strategy choices
- Helps monitor strategy effectiveness
- Can enhance motivation



# Sleep Hygiene

## When it may help:

- Beneficial for everyone, but if you experience chronic insomnia, you will likely have to incorporate other strategies

## How to:

- Expose yourself to light when you wake
- Limit napping
- Limit stimulants/alcohol
- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule
- Exercise, but not before bed
- Have a sleep routine
- Dim lighting before bed/turn off electronics



# The Cycle of Insomnia

Lying in awake in bed night after night



Pairs bed/bedroom with  
wakefulness/frustration/anxiety

Bed/Bedroom



Wakefulness/frustration/anxiety

# Stimulus Control

## When it may help:

- Use bed/bedroom to do various activities
- Long periods of wakefulness throughout night

## How to:

- Go to bed only once feeling sleepy
- Only use bed for sleep
- Leave your bedroom if you are awake for more than 20 minutes at a time
- Set a consistent wake up time
- No napping



# Sleep Restriction

## When it may help:

- Restless sleep and do not feel refreshed upon waking
- No prolonged wakings during the night
- Lots of time in bed “trying” to sleep

## How to:

- Calculate average total sleep time (TST) and sleep efficiency (sleep efficiency goal is 90%)
- Limit time in bed to average TST (but no less than 5 hours)
- No napping

# Cognitive Restructuring

## When it may help:

- You tell yourself a lot of “should’s” about sleep
- Stress, anxiety or depression may be impacting your sleep

## How to:

- Identify your thoughts
- Challenge your thoughts
- Use alternate thoughts to impact your behaviors



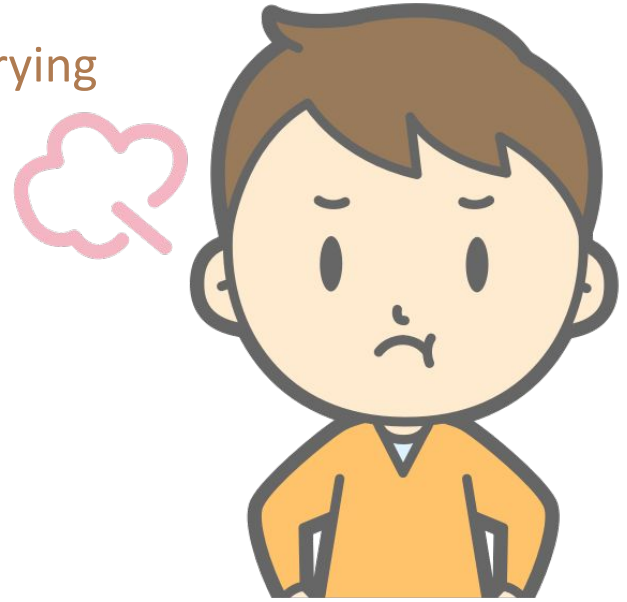
# Worry Time

## When it may help:

- You spend a lot of time during the day worrying
- You worry when you want to be sleeping

## How to:

- Schedule time to worry
- Delay all worries until that time





# Mindfulness

## When it may help:

- Racing and/or repetitive thoughts
- Frustration arises when not sleeping
- Worry time isn't working

## How to:

- Various different mindfulness exercises (focusing on the present)
  - 5 senses
  - Breath



# Resource

[www.mysleepwell.ca](http://www.mysleepwell.ca)

