

## SLEEP OVERVIEW

Sleep is a fascinating, complex, and necessary human behavior. Establishing routine, good-quality sleep is an essential component of good mental and physical health. Periodic and minor sleep difficulty is present in almost all people. It is a common attribute and signal of highly stressful periods, transitions in significant areas of life, and during grief. Sustained sleep difficulty can be a sign of deeper psychological shifts or possibly a serious medical condition. Because sleep is a behavior, effective sleep improvements define and manage this behavior. Medications can be an essential part of care and are best used for short-term, defined sleep difficulties. We will complete the following steps to improve your sleep:

### 1. Develop a working knowledge of sleep (Week 1).

I am committed to helping you understand and improve your sleep. If you are a verbal learner we will discuss it. If you are a visual learner, I will draw and explain a few useful diagrams. If possible, please use the internet, library, and the smart people in your social network to learn more about sleep.

- I recommend you review [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org) and [www.sleepfoundation.org/](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/)

### 2. (Re)frame your expected course of sleep improvement (Weeks 1-2)

Improving sleep is often a tough, large challenge. Most people who are seeking professional help have been struggling with the challenge for a long time. We may use medications in the short-term if needed; however, real change will not be pill based and will take time. Improving your sleep often requires a minimum 4-6 weeks at least for highly motivated people, and the resulting quality of life improvements will likely be worth it.

- Give yourself time to learn about sleep and to discover what does/does not influence it for you.

### 3. Develop activities that support sleep; limit activities that reduce sleep (or accept their effects)

Based on our work, you will discover what behaviors and choices are linked to your sleep pattern(s). As an initial starting point, consider these factors identified in literature and practice associated with decreased sleep:

- ✓ *Get tired.* Walk or do other exercise at least 30-minutes, 4 times per week.
- ✓ *Manage your circadian rhythm.* Wake up and get up daily at the same time daily and avoid naps.
  - Remove all activity in bed except for *sleep and sex* while in bed during your sleep improvement period.
  - Limit *caffeine* (if it is a part of your day, aim to stop use 10 hours before your target sleep time)
  - Limit *alcohol* (if it a part of your evening, know it may cause sleepiness and rebound wakefulness)
  - Limit *intense emotion* just prior to sleep (arguments, movies, intense decisions...); hormones of an argument or conflict may require a few hours from which to “wind down”
  - Limit *your phone and additional electronics.* Move them away from your bed at least for a 2 week break.

### 4. Develop a deep understanding of your sleep (Weeks 2-3).

We are poor at accurately recalling the amount we sleep each night. We are very poor at accurately recalling how much we sleep over a period weeks or months. If we are to make an informed decision about improving your sleep, we will use a plan and a sleep chart or app. We will begin your sleep improvement plan by charting the time you go to bed, estimate the time you go to sleep, the time and duration if you wake up, and the time you get up for the day.

### 5. Establish good sleep hygiene (Weeks 3-6+, establishing a daily routine then make it yours)

Based on your understanding of yourself and the science of sleep, we will collaborative define and improve biological, psychological, and social factors influencing your sleep through the following steps (or we will use an app):

1. Define a (new, tenable) target time to be in bed each night 30 minutes before you want to sleep
  - ★ *INITIAL TARGET BEDTIME TIME:*
2. Establish a 30 minute transition from intense, wakeful activity to your target bed time
3. Train your brain to sleep when in bed.
  - ✓ *Establish a collaborative plan to expand your sleep from the minimum good sleep hygiene initial plan to one that better fits your goals and daily/weekly routine*
  - ✓ *If awake longer than 45 minutes get up and go to a boring, quiet, dim, comfortable place until sleepy, then return to bed (avoid screens; repeat if needed)*
4. Use your sleep improvement plan, document your great and imperfect efforts, collaborate with a sleep professional, and keep working until you have a good enough, personal sleep plan to meet you needs.