TIPS FOR GETTING A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP

Poor & disturbed sleep is often a consequence of heightened feelings of stress & anxiety. As this is a time where many of us are feeling increasingly concerned about our health, the health of our family & friends, as well as our jobs & financial situation, difficulty sleeping is a common experience.

The following may help to improve your ability to get a good night's sleep:

Establish a regular & consistent sleep/wake cycle: Try & go to bed & wake up at roughly the same time each day. Research suggests we need about 8 hours sleep. Set your bed & wake time accordingly.

Have a pre-bed routine: Have a bath or a shower; read a book; have a warm glass of milk; listen to music; practice relaxation or meditation. Refrain from excessive screen time prior to bed as research suggests this interferes with sleep. You can train your mind & body to associate these activities with sleep. In this way they become signals of sleep & help to prepare us accordingly.

Practice relaxation or meditation: Creating a quiet mind & a quiet body can help to alleviate stress & anxiety, reduce worry & put us in a state more conducive to sleep. Try progressive muscle relaxation &/or mindfulness meditation

Don't lie in bed if you can't sleep: You don't want your bed to become a signal of being awake. If you find that you cannot sleep after about 20 minutes, get up & leave your room. Go & engage in a low stimulating activity, like those in your pre-bed routine. Go back to bed when you are feeling tired. Repeat this sequence as necessary.
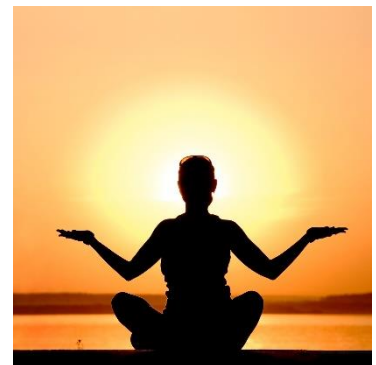
Manage worries: If you find worries or negative thoughts are keeping you up, try writing these thoughts down & make a deal with yourself that you will address them the next day. Some people describe worrying about not being able to go to sleep, which in turns creates anxiety & sleeplessness. Check out our worksheets on managing worry to help you address these concerns http://www.gasperandassociates.com/worry-management.html

Be wary of what you eat & drink: Stimulants such as caffeine & nicotine can interfere with your ability to sleep. Alcohol can make you sleepy, however its hypnotic effects tend to wear off & interrupt your sleep. Eating a big meal &/or feeling hungry before bed can negatively affect sleep.

Create a restful environment: Ensure your room is comfortable. A dark, cool & quiet room is generally considered ideal for sleep. If need be, remove your phone, computer or alarm clock. They can be very distracting & incompatible with sleep.

Limit day time naps: In general, it's not a good idea to nap during the day. If you are going to have a nap try & keep it to under 30 minutes.

Exercise: Try & get at least 20 to 30 minutes of exercise each day. It is better to exercise at least 5 to 6 hours before bed to gain the maximum benefit for sleep.

If you feel you need professional support talk to your GP &/or make an appointment to see one of our Clinical Psychologists. Call (08) 9468 7512 or email using the contact form