Session 5b

Getting a good night’s sleep

This step teaches you how to get a good night’s sleep and so be better able to fight stress the next day.

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These booklets can only be used as part of a Stress Control® class
Part 1: INFORMATION

Getting a good night’s sleep is crucial in controlling stress. Daytime stress can knock your sleep off and poor sleep then makes you less able to fight stress the next day. Getting a good night’s sleep recharges your batteries and makes it easier to cope with the day’s stressors. Sleep helps our minds and bodies develop; it repairs our tired bodies and sorts out our thoughts and memories. A good night’s sleep boosts our wellbeing.

Below are some of the most common types of sleep problems. Rate how badly each affects you using a scale between 0 and 10 where 0 = ‘not at all’ and 10 = ‘could not be worse’:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>getting to sleep</td>
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<tr>
<td>waking up during the night (and then being unable to get back to sleep)</td>
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<tr>
<td>waking too early (often a sign that depression is involved)</td>
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<tr>
<td>sleeping too much (but still feeling tired)</td>
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<tr>
<td>poor sleep quality (feeling that sleep hasn’t refreshed you)</td>
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Common reasons for not getting a good sleep are:

- Stress
- Age
- Need to go to toilet
- Noisy surrounds
- Pain
- Poor routine
- Too much artificial light
- Too much caffeine
- Shift work

Just like the risk factors for panicky feelings we looked at last week, control the ones you can and cope better with the ones you can’t.
The ‘Sleep Cycle’

Sleep is made up of 5 stages. When we first fall asleep, we go into **Stage 1** sleep. This is a very light sleep.

As you go into **Stage 2** and **Stage 3**, your sleep gets deeper.

By **Stage 4**, you are in a very deep sleep.

You then go into the fifth stage called Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep. This is when most of our dreams occur (we only recall our dreams if we wake up during REM sleep).

Once REM sleep is over, we go back to Stage 1 sleep. We may go through this cycle about 4 or 5 times each night. It is normal to wake up at least once during in the night. And as long as you fall asleep quickly then it is nothing to worry about.

We get more deep sleep at the start of the night. We get more REM sleep towards morning. Deep sleep helps our bodies recover. REM sleep helps our minds recover. So, a lack of REM and Deep sleep can badly affect us during the day.

So, getting a good night’s sleep means we get enough deep sleep and enough REM sleep. This helps us to recharge our batteries. A good night’s sleep gets us in better shape to face the next day and in better shape to fight off stress.
Part 2: SKILLS

Step 1: sleeping tips

**Your sleeping needs**

**Age** As we get older, we need less sleep. Once we get into middle age, we get less Deep Sleep and so can be woken more easily. So, most middle-aged people don’t need as much sleep as they did when they were twenty. Are you perhaps trying to sleep too long for your needs?

**Life style** The amount of sleep you need also depends on life style. So those with a hectic lifestyle where they expend a lot of energy each day will probably need more sleep than someone with a more sedate life style.

**Pills** Sleeping tablets do not work in the long run (they often don’t even work in the short run). They change the type of sleep you get. Don’t depend on them.

**Your bedroom**

**Bedroom** At some point in the day, open the windows to let in fresh air.

**Temperature** This is the ‘Goldilocks Rule’: the room should not be too hot or too cold. Around 64F or 18C is best.

**Your bed** If your bed is past its best, and if you can afford it, think about a new one. Make sure your pillows are right for you. Don’t have a duvet that makes you too hot.

**Light** We are made to sleep in the dark. So make sure you have thick curtains or blackout blinds. An eyemask works fine. Try to avoid bright screens, e.g. on your tablet, while reading in bed. If you really must check your phone, dim the screen as much as you can in the evening.
Noise  If you can’t stop the noise outside the house, use earplugs. You can also get an FM radio, tune it off the station so you get ‘white noise’. This is good for swallowing up other noises.

Calm your body

Exercise  can be helpful but don’t do this in the few hours before going to bed – early evening is perfect. See the Controlling your Body booklet for more advice.

Drink  Try to reduce your liquid intake in the evening. This may stop you from wakening to go to the toilet.

Food  Avoid big meals in the few hours before bedtime. A slice of toast or a biscuit before bed should be fine. Avoid fatty or spicy food. Avoid red wine, cheese nuts and bacon as these tend to wake us up. Bread and pasta, though, can be good for making us drowsy.

Caffeine  This wakes up our bodies. Try to cut it out as much as you can from late afternoon onwards. See the Controlling your Body booklet for more advice.

Milky drinks  The old wives were right! Ovaltine, Horlicks or hot milk might help you get to sleep. Take these instead of tea or coffee at bedtime.

Smoking  Like caffeine, nicotine wakes up the body and keeps us on the alert. Try not to smoke for at least 90 minutes before bed. Never smoke if you wake up during the night. If you are a heavy smoker, you would be best to give up. Ask your doctor for advice on ways of stopping.

Alcohol  Never rely on alcohol to get to sleep. Although it can do this, it can wake you up more easily. It makes us snore more, affects our breathing and, so, makes us more restless. It reduces Deep Sleep and REM sleep.

Body temperature  Just as I suggested that you need to go for the ‘Goldilocks rule’ for your bedroom, the same goes for you. So don’t have a hot bath or shower straight before bed. And try not to be too cold before jumping into bed.
**Worry time** Set a time in the evening to do your worrying – say 8pm. So, if you start to worry in the morning, stop yourself and ‘save’ the worry until your Worry Time. Come 8pm, stop what you are doing and worry about all the things you have stored up over the day. Chances are you will have forgotten them. Or, even if you do try to worry, chances are you’ll find it very hard to feel the worry.

**Arguments** Try not to go to bed on an argument. So, work hard to make up before you get into the bedroom. If arguments are common, do you need to try to sort out the relationship?

**Relaxation** Use one of your relaxation tracks before going to, or when you are in, bed. Once you get good at it, you should be able to run it through your head without having to listen to the track.

**Bedtime routine** Go to bed at more or less the same time. Get up at the same time. Avoid long lies. Build up a routine at night that tells your body that you are getting ready for bed.

**Relax before bed** Think of ways to slow yourself down in the hour before going to bed. Decide what you want to do – read?, listen to music?, chat? Try to avoid screens – TV, phones, etc

**Tech detox** See if you can avoid (or, at least, limit) all technology in the hour before bed. Don’t check emails, texts, social media while in bed.

**Let your world grow dark** As daylight fades, a surge of melatonin get released into the brain to prepare us for sleep. Electric and blue LED light (e.g. from phones and laptops) stop our brains responding well to this boost. So, ‘go back to nature’ by cutting back on as much artificial light as you can.

**Your partner** If your partner snores or is restless, ask if he or she could move to another room or the sofa. Your partner has to move – not you – as you have to learn to sleep well in your own bed. Once you are making progress, your partner can be invited back to sleep in the same bed.
Here is a suggested timetable for getting ready to sleep. It is based on a bedtime of 11pm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daytime</strong></td>
<td>Open windows to let in fresh air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4pm</td>
<td>Start to cut out caffeine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5pm</td>
<td>Cut out alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>No large meals after this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>Start cutting down on liquid intake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>Exercise should finish by now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>No more smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8pm</td>
<td>Worry time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9pm</td>
<td>Shower, bathe by now to allow your body to cool down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9pm</td>
<td>Let your world darken – lamps on, try to avoid TV or, at least, darken screens</td>
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<tr>
<td>10pm</td>
<td>Try a milky drink (but not too much)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Start your bedtime routine / slow down – read, talk, music?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Into 18c bedroom. Into bed. Lights out. Try to sleep immediately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Retraining your sleep

For those with long standing problems with sleep, this step teaches you a great skill. It asks a lot of you, but it will be well worth it in the end. **YOU MUST FOLLOW THIS TO THE LETTER.**

**Think of a good sleeper** - her *associations* with bed are all good:

“This is the place where I get to sleep, where I feel safe, comfy, relaxed and content. I’ll wake up refreshed and feeling that I’ve recharged my batteries”

As she leaves the living room and walks towards her bedroom, everything is working in her favour. Her chances of sleeping well tonight are good.

**Think of a poor sleeper** – he associates the bed with not sleeping.

“This is the place where I don’t get to sleep; where I toss and turn, where I feel stressed, angry, frustrated. This is a place where I never get a decent rest”

As he leaves the living room and walks towards his bedroom, everything is working against him. His chances of sleeping well tonight are poor.

So, **Retraining your Sleep** is all about changing your associations with your bed. There are six stages:
**Stage 1**  
Don’t go to bed until you feel sleepy

You no longer have a ‘bed-time’. Only go to bed once you start to feel sleepy. You must stay up until you feel tired *no matter how long this takes.*

**Stage 2**  
Your bedroom is only for sleeping

This step gets rid of the things that keep you from sleep. You need to *associate* the bed only with sleeping. If you are reading, you are not sleeping, so it must go. So, you should not watch TV, check emails, phone friends, etc. Sex is OK though. As it can help relax you and may help you get to sleep. As soon as you get into bed, put the light out and try to sleep. Though you may know good sleepers who read in bed or watch TV, you must do these things outside the bedroom at least until you get on top of the problems.

**Stage 3**  
If you don’t fall asleep in 20 minutes, get up

After 20 minutes, go back to the living room. Don’t watch TV. Don't eat or drink. You could read a magazine or listen to relaxing music. You must stay in the living room until you feel sleepy again *no matter how long this takes.* When you feel sleepy, go back to bed.

**Stage 4**  
Repeat (and repeat and repeat)

Repeat step 3 again and again if you have to. So, you have 20 minutes each time to get to sleep. If you don't - it's back to the living room.

**Stage 5**  
Get up early each morning

Get up no later than 8.30am. Set the alarm and as soon as it goes off, get up and out the bedroom.
Stage 6 Don’t try to catch up on sleep

You may want to nap during the day to catch up on lost sleep. Don’t do it. Save the sleep for bedtime. Work out when you most want to sleep during the day. Then work out a way of dealing with this - go out for a walk, phone a friend, etc.

This is a great skill, but it is also a hard one to follow to the letter. It makes great demands on you in the first few nights. It is very tempting to stay in bed after 20 minutes, to have a long lie or to have an afternoon nap because you can hardly keep your eyes open. Fight these urges the whole way.

It can help to keep a sleep diary. You’ll find one on the next page. Don’t expect rapid change. Your poor sleep may have built up over a long time. So, it will take time to get better. It will be well worth it in the long run.
# Sleep diary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What time did you go to bed last night?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How long did it take you to fall asleep?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How many times did you wake up in the night?</td>
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<td>What time did you finally wake up?</td>
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<td>How would you rate last night’s sleep? (between 1 – 10 where 1 = terrible sleep and 10 = brilliant sleep)</td>
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