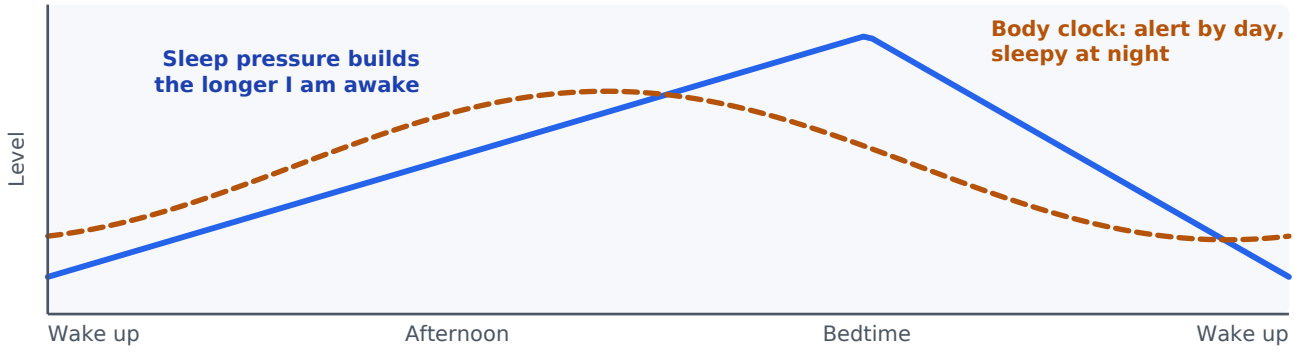
How sleep works

How sleep pressure and the body clock control when you sleep.

You cannot make yourself sleep. Sleep happens when two systems in the body line up.



Sleep pressure
Builds from the moment you wake. The longer you are up and the more active you are, the stronger it gets. Sleep empties it again. Naps, lie-ins and early nights all reduce it.

The body clock
A roughly 24-hour rhythm that makes you alert by day and sleepy at night. It is set mainly by light, especially morning daylight, and by regular times for getting up.

You fall asleep easily when sleep pressure is high and the body clock says "night". Trouble starts when the two get out of step.

Useful facts

- **Sleep comes in cycles** of about 90 minutes, moving through lighter sleep, deep sleep and dreaming sleep.
- **Waking in the night is normal.** Most people wake briefly several times and do not remember it.
- **Need varies.** Most adults need somewhere between seven and nine hours. Some need less. How you function in the day is a better guide than the number.
- **You can cope with a bad night.** The body makes up for lost sleep mainly by sleeping more deeply the next night. It does not need the same hours back.
- **You cannot force it.** Trying hard to sleep wakes you up. Sleep comes more easily when you stop trying.

The three things that matter most

1. Get up at the same time every day.
2. Get daylight in the morning.
3. Stay out of bed until you are sleepy.

Note
Your body already knows how to sleep. Most of the work is removing the things that get in its way.

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The insomnia cycle

How a few bad nights turn into a lasting problem.

Most insomnia starts for a good reason: stress, illness, a new baby, a change of routine. It carries on because of what we do, quite understandably, to cope with it.



What keeps it going

- **Too much time in bed.** More hours in bed spreads sleep thinner and makes it lighter and more broken.
- **Irregular hours.** Lie-ins and naps weaken sleep pressure and confuse the body clock.
- **Bed linked with being awake.** After enough bad nights, getting into bed is enough to make you alert.
- **Effort.** Trying hard to sleep keeps you awake.
- **Daytime worry.** Watching for tiredness and blaming everything on sleep keeps the pressure on.

What breaks it

1. A fixed getting-up time, seven days a week.
2. Going to bed only when sleepy.
3. Getting out of bed when you cannot sleep.
4. A shorter, more regular time in bed.
5. A wind-down routine and a plan for a busy mind.
6. Easing off the struggle.

Treatment

This approach is called CBT for insomnia. It is the recommended first treatment for long-term sleep problems and works for most people within a few weeks.

My notes and questions

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Sleep diary

One week of sleep, recorded each morning.

Name _____ Date _____

Fill in each column within an hour of getting up. Estimates are fine. Do not clock-watch in the night to get them exact.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time I got into bed							
Time I tried to go to sleep							
Minutes to fall asleep							
Number of times I woke							
Minutes awake in the night							
Time of final waking							
Time I got out of bed							
Hours of sleep (estimate)							
Sleep quality (0 to 10)							
Naps (minutes)							
Caffeine after 2pm							
Alcohol (drinks)							

Bring this to your next session. We will use it to work out your sleep pattern and plan changes.

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Sleep habits checklist

The everyday things that help sleep or get in its way.

Name _____ Date _____

Tick what you already do. Circle one or two to work on. Good habits alone rarely cure insomnia, but they give the other strategies a fair chance.

During the day

- [ ] I get up at the same time every day
- [ ] I get outside in daylight in the morning
- [ ] I move my body most days
- [ ] I avoid naps, or keep them under 20 minutes before 3pm
- [ ] I stop caffeine by early afternoon

In the evening

- [ ] I finish eating two to three hours before bed
- [ ] I keep alcohol low and not close to bedtime
- [ ] I avoid nicotine near bedtime
- [ ] I wind down for the last hour
- [ ] I dim the lights and put screens away
- [ ] I deal with tomorrow's worries earlier in the evening

In the bedroom

- [ ] My room is dark, quiet and cool
- [ ] My bed is comfortable
- [ ] I use my bed only for sleep and sex
- [ ] My phone charges outside the room, or out of reach
- [ ] The clock is turned away from me

At night

- [ ] I go to bed only when sleepy
- [ ] If I am awake for a long time, I get up
- [ ] I do not check the time in the night

The one or two changes I will make this week

What might make that hard, and how I will handle it

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Bed is for sleep

Six rules that rebuild the link between bed and sleep.

After many nights of lying awake, your brain links bed with being alert and frustrated. These rules break that link and rebuild the connection between bed and sleep. They are simple, and they work, though the first week or two can be tiring.

The rules

1. **Go to bed only when you are sleepy.** Not just tired: eyes heavy, head nodding. If that is later than usual, so be it.
2. **Use the bed only for sleep and sex.** No phone, TV, work, eating or worrying in bed.
3. **If you are awake for what feels like 15 to 20 minutes, get up.** Go to another room. Do something quiet and dull in low light. Do not look at the clock.
4. **Go back to bed only when sleepy again.** Repeat as often as you need to.
5. **Get up at the same time every morning**, however the night went. Weekends too.
6. **Do not nap.**

Make it easier

- Set up a "night spot" in advance: a chair, a blanket, a lamp, a book that is not too gripping.
- In winter, leave a dressing gown ready so getting up is less grim.
- Tell anyone you live with what you are doing and why.

What to expect

- You may get less sleep for the first few nights. That builds sleep pressure, which is what makes the method work.
- Getting up feels like the wrong thing to do. It is the most important rule.
- Most people notice they are falling asleep faster within one to three weeks.

> **Take care**
> You may be sleepier than usual at first. Be careful with driving and anything that needs full alertness.

My getting-up time, every day

Where I will go and what I will do if I am awake

These instructions are known as stimulus control, developed by Richard Bootzin.

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My wind-down routine

Plan the last hour before bed.

Name _____ Date _____

You cannot go from full speed to asleep. A wind-down routine tells your body that the day is finished. Aim for the last 45 to 60 minutes before bed, in the same order each night.

Ideas

- [ ] Dim the lights
- [ ] Put the phone away
- [ ] Lay out things for tomorrow
- [ ] Write tomorrow's list
- [ ] Wash, or have a warm shower
- [ ] Read something light
- [ ] Listen to calm music or a podcast
- [ ] Gentle stretches
- [ ] Slow breathing
- [ ] A warm, caffeine-free drink

Time	What I will do

What I will stop doing in the last hour

What would get in the way, and what I will do about it

Night	Did my wind-down	Sleepy at bedtime? (0 to 10)
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

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A busy mind at night

Write down tomorrow's worries and tasks earlier in the evening.

Worries and unfinished tasks tend to come to mind at bedtime, when it is quiet. If you go through them earlier in the evening, fewer turn up in bed.

How to do it

1. Early in the evening, at least two hours before bed, sit down with this sheet for ten to fifteen minutes.
2. In the left column, write whatever is on your mind: tasks, problems, worries.
3. In the right column, write the next small step you could take, and when. If there is nothing you can do, write "nothing to do tonight".
4. Fold the page and leave it somewhere outside the bedroom.
5. If the thoughts come back in bed, remind yourself: "I have dealt with that as far as I can today. It is written down."

What is on my mind	Next step, and when

If thoughts still come in bed

- Keep a notepad by the bed. Write one line and let it go.
- Say a neutral word such as "the" slowly in your head, over and over. It blocks other thoughts without waking you up.
- Picture something calm in detail: a walk you know well, step by step.

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Unhelpful thoughts about sleep

What you believe about sleep can keep you awake.

Name _____ Date _____

Worrying about sleep raises the alarm level in your body, which is the opposite of what sleep needs. Many of the things we tell ourselves about sleep are not accurate.

The thought	A more accurate view
"I need eight hours or I cannot function."	Need varies. Most people cope better than they expect after a short night, and the body compensates with deeper sleep.
"If I do not sleep tonight, tomorrow is ruined."	Tomorrow may be harder. It will not be ruined. I have managed on poor sleep before.
"I have lost the ability to sleep."	Sleep is automatic. It can be disrupted and it cannot be lost.
"I should stay in bed and try harder."	Trying keeps me awake. Getting up until I am sleepy works better.
"Lying there resting is nearly as good."	Long stretches awake in bed teach my brain that bed is for being awake.
"Poor sleep is wrecking my health."	Worry about sleep is a bigger problem for me right now than the sleep itself, and it can be treated.

The thought about sleep that bothers me most

How much do I believe it?

0 — 10 — 20 — 30 — 40 — 50 — 60 — 70 — 80 — 90 — 100

Not at all — Completely

Evidence for it

Evidence against it

Including days I coped better than I expected

A more accurate and calmer version

How might I act differently at night, and during the day, if I believed that?

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Awake in the night: what to do

Steps to follow when you wake in the night, with cards to keep by the bed.

Waking in the night is normal. The aim is to stay calm and let sleep come back. Trying to make yourself sleep does not work.

1. **Do not look at the clock.** Knowing the time only starts the sums.
2. **Stay easy.** Tell yourself: "Waking is normal. Rest is fine. Sleep will come when it comes."
3. **Give it a little while.** Breathe slowly. Let your body be heavy.
4. **If you are wide awake or getting wound up, get up.** Go to your night spot. Low light, something quiet and dull.
5. **No phone, no email, no news.**
6. **Go back to bed when you feel sleepy.** Repeat if you need to.
7. **Get up at your usual time,** whatever happened.

Notes to self

- One bad night does not undo my progress.
- The more I chase sleep, the faster it runs.
- I have got through tired days before.

My plan

My night spot

Where I will go if I am wide awake

What I will do there, quiet and dull

- [ ] A paper book
- [ ] A puzzle
- [ ] Soft music
- [ ] Herbal tea

What I will leave ready there before bed

Cut along the dashed lines. Keep a card in your wallet or phone case.

Awake at night

No clock. No phone. Stay easy. If wide awake, get up and do something dull in low light. Back to bed when sleepy. Up at the usual time.

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What I want to tell myself at 3am

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