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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