Sleep: myths and facts

Some common beliefs that make sleep harder.

Myth	Fact
Everyone needs eight hours.	Need differs between people and changes across life. Seven to nine hours suits most adults. Some do well on less.
Good sleepers sleep straight through.	Everyone wakes several times a night. Good sleepers just drop off again without noticing.
You can catch up at the weekend.	Lie-ins confuse the body clock and make Sunday night harder. A steady getting-up time works better.
If you cannot sleep, stay in bed and rest.	Long periods awake in bed strengthen the link between bed and wakefulness.
A drink helps you sleep.	Alcohol helps you fall asleep, then causes lighter, broken sleep later in the night.
Older people need less sleep.	The need stays much the same. Sleep becomes lighter and more broken with age, and often shifts earlier.
Lost sleep must be paid back hour for hour.	The body recovers mostly by sleeping more deeply, not by sleeping as long again.
Watching TV in bed helps me unwind.	For good sleepers it may be harmless. With insomnia, it keeps the brain linking bed with being awake.
Insomnia means something is seriously wrong.	It is very common and usually kept going by habits and worry, which can be changed.

A belief about sleep I have held that might not be true

What I might do differently now

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