

Sleep Problems

Moodjuice Self-help Guide



Learn more about sleep problems
and skills to cope with them.

Self Help for Sleep Problems

- Do you feel that you're not getting enough sleep?
- Do you lie awake at night worrying?
- Do you feel that your everyday life is affected by a lack of sleep?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes,' you may be experiencing problems with your sleep and you may find this workbook helpful.

This workbook aims to help you to:

- Recognise whether you may be experiencing problems with your sleep.
- Understand what sleep problems are, what causes them and what keeps them going.
- Find ways to understand, manage or overcome your sleep problems.

Contents of this Self Help Guide

Strategies that you could use to overcome your sleep problems:

1. Understanding more about sleep.
2. Learning how you can feel more relaxed, both physically and mentally.
3. Consider making positive changes to your lifestyle.
4. Improving your problem solving skills.

When going through this booklet it might be helpful to try out each strategy one at a time, rather than trying to learn them all at once. However, simply take things at your own pace.

Do I have a sleep problem?

If you experience problems with your sleep, then it is likely that you will recognise many of the feelings, physical symptoms, thoughts and behaviour patterns described below.

Please tick the boxes which regularly apply to you.



Feelings

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| Tense | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Irritable | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stressed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Worried | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Physical Symptoms

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Tired / Exhausted | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restless | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lacking energy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor concentration | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disturbed sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Thoughts

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| I'm never going to get enough sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I'm bound to have a terrible day tomorrow | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I'll be awake all night | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I will fall asleep at work and get in trouble | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Behaviour Patterns

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Trying to catch up on sleep during the day | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lying awake in bed at night | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Frequently checking the clock during the night | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you have ticked a number of these boxes it is possible that you are experiencing problems with your sleep. However don't be alarmed, this is a common issue that can be overcome. By following the steps in this workbook, you may be able to learn how to improve your situation.

What are sleep problems?

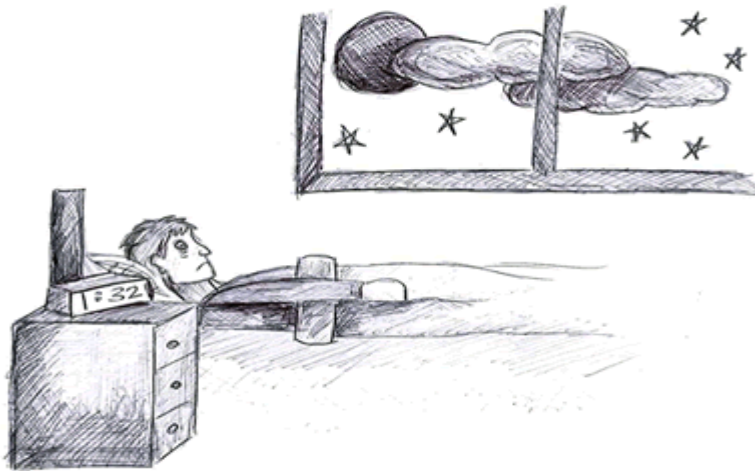
Everyone at one time or another has problems with their sleep. It is very common. Where sleep problems have been going on for a while it is sometimes called insomnia.

It is difficult to judge whether you are getting enough sleep. Different people need different amounts of sleep. This can depend on their age and activity levels, for example. It's important to remember that going without a bit of sleep is not harmful or damaging.

There are different types and stages of sleep. We cycle through these during the night. These range from light, drowsy sleep through deep sleep to dream sleep, or so called 'Rapid Eye Movement' sleep. During these phases we physically and mentally recover. We process memories, heal and grow.

Sleep problems can be broadly categorised into three types:

- Problems getting to sleep - lying awake and not being able to fall asleep.
- Problems staying asleep – waking up early in the morning.
- Poor quality sleep - not feeling refreshed by the sleep you do get.



What causes sleep problems?

Life Events:

Events in your life may be distracting you and causing worries that you go back to whilst trying to get to sleep. Problems with sleep may be secondary to another difficulty. This could be around stress, anxiety or low mood. These might be interfering with your ability to relax and get to sleep. Resolution of an underlying problem can help you to overcome sleep problems.

Thinking Styles:

Often it is anxious thoughts about not getting sufficient sleep that can be most distressing. The actual lack of sleep itself might be secondary. A tendency to catastrophise and worry about the likelihood and consequences of not sleeping can inhibit sleep. This can then develop a vicious cycle. You may find yourself thinking over difficulties and keeping your mind active with unhelpful thoughts.

Behavioural Explanations:

Developing poor habits around sleep, such as not having a clear bedtime routine, can cause problems. For example, failing to unwind and relax before bed, or continuing to be physically or mentally active until just before bedtime. It is also important to consider the environment that you expect to sleep in. Make sure that the temperature and noise levels, for example, do not cause discomfort or distraction.

Associations may also be built up over time. We might begin to relate the bedroom or being in bed with something other than actually sleeping. This can happen when you spend a lot of time in bed awake, or use the bedroom for activities not related to sleep, such as watching TV.

Physical Issues:

Some people experience troublesome physical symptoms that cause problems with sleep. This might include pain or needing to visit the toilet frequently. It can be difficult to achieve a comfortable position and maintain sleep. In addition, the effect of some medications, drugs, alcohol and our everyday diet can impact the quality of our sleep. The consumption of caffeine or nicotine close to bedtime can also impair sleep. As you get older, your sleep pattern is also likely to change. You are likely to have poorer quality sleep and less at night. In reality it is likely that a combination of all these factors influence a person's sleep problems. However, in some ways it is less important to know what causes problems with sleep, and more important to know what stops us moving past them.

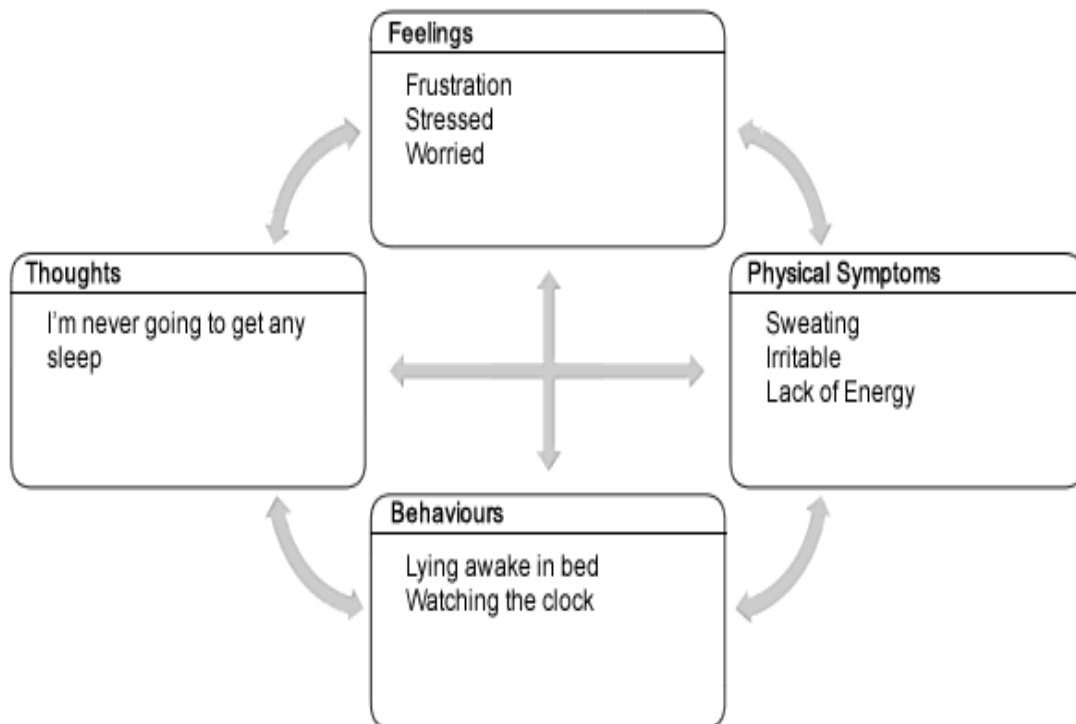
What keeps a sleep problem going?

Often patterns build up in our behaviour which can be unhelpful and actually end up maintaining a problem. A number of habits can develop when we have difficulties sleeping. These can make it more difficult to overcome.

- Predicting that you will not sleep well even before you get to bed.
- Not having a good bedtime routine to relax and unwind at the end of the day.
- Going to bed when you don't feel at all sleepy.
- Beginning to associate being in bed with being awake.
- Not keeping the bed and the bedroom a quiet, peaceful and tidy space.
- Having woken during the night, resorting to an activity that is not going to help you get back to sleep, for example doing work or reading a scary novel.
- Repeatedly checking the time to see how long you've been awake.
- Worrying about the consequences that your lack of sleep might have.
- Trying to catch up with sleep, and as a result, confusing your sleep pattern.

Understanding your sleep problems

Have a look at some of the examples and try to fill in something of your experience. See if you can recognise a similar pattern occurring within yourself.



Relaxation

It is important to make time to relax and do activities that are enjoyable. This can help to improve your sleep by calming the body and mind. It can also help you to sleep. Without taking the time to unwind, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and stressed.

Relaxation can involve doing something that you enjoy, or just being by yourself. Good examples might be reading a book or having a bath. Exercise is also particularly effective at helping us to relax. What you do does not really matter. Try to choose something that you will look forward to and that gives you a break. Doing an activity that you enjoy will also give you less time to spend worrying.

Here are a list of activities that might help you to relax:

Suggestions:

- Do some exercise (e.g. swim, cycle)
- Read a book
- Watch your favourite TV show
- Go to the cinema
- Do something creative (e.g. draw, paint)
- Visit a friend or family member
- Have a bath



Try to add some of your own ideas into the box below. You will know what works best for you.

Try to find time to relax every day. This might seem difficult, but it is worth making time for. It can help you to feel a lot better. There are audio relaxation guides available that you might find a helpful support.

There are also some exercises described in the next few pages. They are specifically designed to help you to relax. However, you should stop the exercise if at any time you begin to experience discomfort or pain.

Controlled breathing

This simple technique involves focusing on and slowing down our breathing patterns. Many people find this simple exercise very relaxing. It can be particularly helpful for those who feel dizzy or light headed when they feel worried or stressed. This sometimes happens because people's breathing changes and gets quicker when they feel distressed.

This can be an uncomfortable and unpleasant experience. It can make people even more on edge, and a vicious cycle can occur. Learning controlled breathing exercises can help you to manage these feelings more effectively. It can also help to give your mind and body a chance to calm down.



Remember, you can use this exercise to help you relax at any time. You could even use it to help you get off to sleep. However, it is particularly useful if you ever feel light-headed, dizzy or faint.



Beginning

Get into a comfortable position.



Middle

Work out a stable breathing rhythm. Perhaps try to breathe in for three seconds, hold this breathe for two seconds, and then breathe out for three seconds. It can be helpful to count as you do this

e.g. IN: 1 – 2 - 3, HOLD: 1 - 2, OUT: 1 - 2 - 3, HOLD: 1 - 2



Ending

Repeat this action for a few minutes. You should soon begin to feel more relaxed. If you were feeling dizzy then this should also get better after a few minutes.

Muscular relaxation

Tension often builds up when we feel upset or stressed. These symptoms can be painful and can cause anxiety in themselves. Muscular relaxation exercises can help you to control such unpleasant symptoms. They can reduce physical tension and help you to relax in general.

During this exercise you have to tense and then relax different muscles in your body. You should focus on the feelings that you experience whilst doing this. With practice you will then be more able to recognise and respond to the onset of tension.

You can work through as many muscle groups as you like. Don't feel that you have to cover every muscle in your whole body. It can be helpful to stick to the same muscle groups each time you practice. That way you can get into a routine which you can easily remember. If you practice this nearly every day you will probably notice an improvement after a couple of weeks.



Beginning

Find somewhere comfortable and quiet where you won't be interrupted. You can either sit or lie down to practice this exercise. Begin by focusing on your breathing. Try to have a slow and comfortable pace. You could use the controlled breathing technique described earlier. Do this for a few minutes to prepare for the muscular relaxation exercise.



Middle

Try to tense each muscle group for around five seconds. Don't tense the muscle too tight. Focus on the sensations that this brings. Then relax your muscles for a similar length of time, and again, focus on how this feels. Then move onto the next muscle group. Try to remember to keep your breathing at a comfortable pace throughout. Below are some suggestions of muscle groups that you may wish to work through:

- Legs - point your toes and tense your muscles as if you were trying to stand up.
- Stomach - tense your stomach muscles.
- Arms - make fists and tense your muscles as if you were trying to lift something.
- Shoulders - shrug your shoulders. Lift them up towards your ears.
- Face - make a frowning expression. Squeeze your eyes shut and screw up your nose. Clench your teeth.



Ending

It can be helpful to spend a few minutes just lying quietly in a relaxed state. See if you can notice any tension in your body and try to relax it. Otherwise, just let the tension be. If your mind wanders, try to bring your concentration back to your breathing.

Finally, count down silently and slowly: **5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 - 0**, come out of the relaxation in your own time. See if it's possible to carry that relaxed feeling into whatever you do next.

Distraction

Distraction is a good technique to fend off symptoms of anxiety and stress when they feel overwhelming. This can also give you space to deal with a situation in a more considered and positive manner. It is also helpful when you don't have the space or time to use a more proactive approach, such as a relaxation exercise.

Distraction simply involves trying to take your mind off uncomfortable symptoms or thoughts. You can do this by trying to focus on something unrelated. Often this helps them to pass. It is still important to remember that the symptoms of anxiety are not harmful or dangerous. Even if you didn't use distraction or relaxation techniques, nothing terrible would happen.

Ideas to help distract you from your troubling thoughts or anxiety include:

- Try to appreciate small details in your surroundings.
- Count backwards from 1000 in multiples of 7.
- Focus on your breathing, for example, how it feels to breathe in and out.
- Count things that you can see that begin with a particular letter.
- Visualise being in a pleasant, safe and comfortable environment (e.g. being on a beach).
- Listen to your favourite music. Try to pick out all the different instruments and sounds that you can hear.

As with any relaxation exercise, it may take a few minutes before you begin to feel like it's working.

Looking After Yourself

Taking steps towards a healthy lifestyle can have a real impact on our sleep. On the other hand, unhealthy habits can put your health, or the health of others, at risk. It can be a real challenge to overcome some habits or behaviours. Focusing on the benefits of positive change may boost your motivation.



Alcohol

Alcohol can impact your ability to cope and control behaviours. This can be unhelpful if you are trying to overcome problems with anger or anxiety. It can also interfere with your mood, and the quality of your sleep. You might think that consuming alcohol would help you sleep. In fact, as your body processes alcohol overnight it can wake you up. Some people use the numbing effect of alcohol to avoid thinking about or facing problems. Unfortunately, this approach can be damaging and make things worse. Drinking a lot and often can lead to a pattern of addictive substance misuse.



Drugs

Many drugs have a sedative or stimulant effect on the body which can have an impact on your sleep and mood. Some people use recreational drugs as a distraction, to avoid thinking about or facing problems. Using such substances can be damaging and make things worse. Developing a habit of regular or increasing use can lead to a pattern of addictive substance misuse.



Smoking

The content of cigarette smoke and nicotine replacements act as a stimulant. This can have an impact on your sleep and your mood. Some people say that smoking helps them to cope with stress. Smoking is known to have a negative impact on long-term physical health.



Caffeine

Caffeine can trigger a reaction that is similar to the symptoms of anxiety. It can also reduce the quality of sleep. It is best not to have anything caffeinated within four hours of bedtime. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, energy drinks, and some fizzy drinks contain caffeine.

By cutting down or stopping your consumption of potentially harmful substances, you are taking steps towards a healthier lifestyle.



Relationships / Social Network

Good relationships and support from friends and family can really help us cope better. It can also mean that we overcome problems more quickly and for longer. It can be really helpful to talk through difficulties with friends. You could discuss ways of coping, and some of them might have been through something similar.



Healthy Eating

What you eat and drink can have a significant impact on your mood, sleep and physical health. Consider making changes towards having a balanced, nutritious diet. Try to eat regular meals and stay hydrated. Avoid unhealthy foods that contain a lot of fat or sugar. Also, consider what you eat and drink close to bedtime. Caffeine, alcohol or a large meal can interfere with your sleep.



Exercise

Keeping fit and active can improve your physical health, mood and ability to cope with problems. Try to get at least some gentle exercise each week. You could try going for a walk, doing the garden or housework, playing sport or joining an exercise class. While exercise can also help us sleep, try not to be too active close to bedtime as this can keep you awake.



Routine

Having a consistent routine can help give structure to your life. Patterns can be set as we react the same way or do the same thing in certain situations. Our body can begin to expect and follow such routines. For example, taking time to relax and unwind before bed, and getting up at the same time. Watch out for any unhelpful habits also, such as lying awake in bed for too long, or catching up on sleep during the day. Try to strengthen the association of your bed and bedroom with sleep by only going to bed when you feel sleepy.



Surroundings

Notice the impact of your environment on your mood. Consider the noise, temperature and light that you have to deal with. Your comfort and the tidiness of your surroundings can all have an impact on your mood. It can also effect your sleep and your overall ability to cope with problems. Try to take practical steps to resolve any particular issues.

Now you have some ideas to inspire healthy changes to your lifestyle, why not try them out? You could ask a friend for support. If you build them into your daily routine they won't seem like such a chore. Before long you might forget you ever did anything different!

Problem Solving

You might find it more difficult to cope if you have lots of problems that you can't seem to get on top of. This can have a clear impact on our sleep. Struggling with unresolved problems can often make us feel worse. We can end up worrying or ruminating over our problems without finding a way to resolve them. This can make us feel even more upset, and can end up interfering with our sleep.

It can help to develop a structured way of working through a problem. Beginning to overcome some of your problems might help you to feel better. You can improve your problem solving skills by learning to apply the steps outlined here.



Identify your problem

The first thing to ask yourself is “what is the problem?” Try to be as specific as possible.

For example:

- "I owe £400 to my friend."
- "I am going to miss this deadline."



Come up with possible solutions

Try to list every way that you can think to overcome your problem. Don't worry about how unrealistic an idea seems. Write down anything and everything. The best solutions are likely to be the ones you think of yourself. This is because nobody really knows your situation as well as you do.

It may help to consider:

- How you might have solved similar problems in the past.
- What your friends or family would advise.
- How you would like to see yourself tackling the problem.



Choose a solution

Next you need to select the best solution from your list. Think carefully about each option. It is useful to go through all the reasons 'for' and 'against' each idea. This will help you to make a good decision and select the best solution.

After this you may find that you are still unsure. Perhaps a couple of approaches seem equally good. Try to pick one to begin with. If it doesn't work then you can always go back and try out a different one later.



Break down your solution

To help you carry out your chosen solution, it can be useful to break it down into smaller steps. This can make it easier and more manageable to follow through. The number of steps required will vary depending on the solution and how complex it is. For example: Someone with debt may have decided to try and resolve their problem by getting a part time job.

This would require several steps.

1. Buying a newspaper with job adverts.
2. Choosing which jobs to apply for.
3. Creating a CV.
4. Sending out their CV.
5. Buying interview clothes.
6. Preparing answers to potential interview questions.



Try out your solution and review the outcome

Follow the steps required to carry out your solution. Simply take them one at a time. Go at your own pace and don't allow yourself to feel too rushed.

Once you have completed all the steps, you should then review the outcome. If you have successfully resolved your problem then great. If the problem still exists then don't give up.

- Is there another solution on your list that you could try?
- Is there a different solution that you have yet to consider?
- Can you ask someone else if they have any ideas or advice?
- Can you combine any of your solutions?

It is useful to remember that not all problems are within our control. This can make it really difficult if not impossible to resolve using the steps above. Perhaps you will have to wait, or ask someone else to take action instead. In such a situation, try not to worry. Nothing can be gained from worrying about something that you have no control over.



Identify Your Problem

Problem Solving

Identify a problem and try to come up with solutions to overcome it. By considering all of the options you will hopefully come up with the best solution.



Possible Solutions



For

Against



Chosen Solution

Steps Required

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Final Word

We hope that you found some of the ideas in this booklet useful. You can continue to use the techniques you found helpful long into the future and they should continue to benefit you. If some of the ideas are not particularly helpful at first, it is perhaps worth sticking with them for a few weeks to give them a chance to work. If however you feel your situation remains largely unchanged or if you did not find this booklet useful, you should speak to your GP who can tell you about the other options available which you could find helpful.



Further Information and Resources

For further information and self-help resources go to Moodjuice online:

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk>

Moodjuice is a website designed to offer information and advice to those experiencing troublesome thoughts, feelings and behaviours. In the site you can explore various aspects of your life that may be causing you distress and obtain information that will allow you to help yourself. This includes details of organisations, services and other resources that can offer support. This self help guide comes from a series that you can access and print from Moodjuice. Other titles available include:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Assertiveness
- Bereavement
- Chronic Pain
- Depression
- Obsessions and Compulsions
- Panic
- Phobias
- Post Traumatic Stress
- Shyness and Social Phobia
- Sleep Problems
- Stress