BETTER SLEEP
SESSION 3 COURSE WORKBOOK

NHS
Greater Glasgow
and Clyde

wellbeing

Session Three

SLEEP SCHEDULING

### How much sleep do I need and how much am I getting?

You will remember from Session One that everyone's sleep needs differ and that also the amount of sleep we require gets gradually less as we grow older. You will also remember how much sleep you decided you would like to get every night – but you may not know how much sleep you are actually getting right now.

This is because when we suffer from insomnia our sleep tends to be very irregular and each night may be different. Sometimes we may even have slept for what seems like enough hours, but if we have woken up several times during the night we don't feel as though we've had enough sleep.

By using our sleep diaries, we can work out how much sleep we get on average over seven days. Using this average, we can then draw up a 'sleep schedule' that will help us to begin to sleep more soundly through the night.

Getting our sleep into a regular pattern – using sleep scheduling:

Sleep scheduling is a technique we can use to get us back to a good regular sleep pattern – i.e. we will be able to rely on getting a good night's sleep every night. Having already worked out how much sleep we are getting on average per night, we then take this as our starting-point – and the aim is to get **exactly** this number of hours sleep **every** night. Almost certainly this number is smaller than we would like – but this is just a starting-point. The important first step is to get us sleeping soundly every night – and then we can start to gradually increase the number of hours we get.
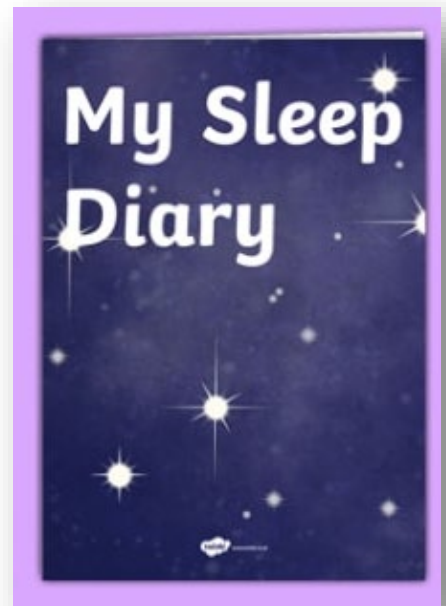
There are two things we need to do now:

1) decide what time we are going to get up every morning and

2) work out what time we will go to bed.

1) We call our chosen rising time our 'anchor' time – as we will be 'anchoring' our sleep around this point. This is important as it will stop our sleep from drifting. Our anchor time should be the earliest time we ever have to get up and we then need to resolve to rise at this time EVERY day. Even if we are not working and do not have to get up early, it is still a good idea to choose a time before 9 am as our bodies are actually preparing to wake up from around 6 o'clock in the morning.

2) Having decided on our 'anchor time' we now need to calculate our 'threshold time' – which is the time before which we will not go to bed (that is, the earliest that we will go to bed). So our 'threshold time' is our chosen bed-time, but remember from last session, we will only go to bed at this time if we are 'sleepy tired' – that is, ready to cross the threshold to sleep. We calculate our 'threshold time' by subtracting our average hours of sleep from our chosen 'anchor time'. For example, if I have chosen 7.00 am as my anchor time and I have been sleeping for 6.5 hours a night on average, my threshold time would be 0.30 am.

If we have found out from our sleep diary that we are currently averaging fewer than six hours a night, then we should work out our schedule based on a six-hour sleep (we don't want to aim too low!). So, for example, if I choose to get up at 7.00 am, and I have been getting an average of 4 hours a night, my threshold time would be 1.00 am.

If we now step back and look at the schedule we have drawn up, it can look a bit scary! It may seem that we are committing to getting up very early in the morning or that we are going to have to stay up very late at night – or maybe both will seem a problem! And naturally we will worry that we may become even more sleep deprived.

This may indeed happen – in the short-term. The important thing to focus on, however, is restoring a regular sleep pattern. Once we have done that, we can then start to increase our hours in bed.
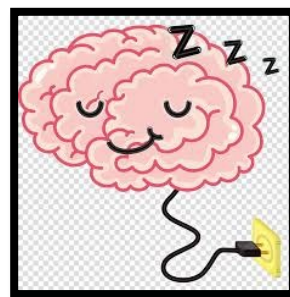
It is very important to pick the right time to introduce our new
sleep schedule – as we will probably feel extra tired for the first few days of it. So, don't start it the day before a job interview or a long drive . . . Most people prefer to start at a weekend when they have nothing much on, or perhaps when they have a holiday from work.

This technique works because initially we will become very sleep-deprived and our need for sleep will therefore increase. As our sleep debt builds up, our drive to sleep will become stronger.

As long as we stick to the schedule - getting out of bed if we are not asleep within 15-20 minutes, repeating this as necessary throughout the night, getting up at our anchor time (even if we have had no sleep at all!) and not allowing ourselves to nap during the day - we are likely to find that, by the second or third night of sleep-scheduling, we will fall asleep the minute our head hits the pillow, and that we will sleep right through till our alarm clock goes off . . . and that's efficient!

Sleep Efficiency

Once we have started on our new sleep schedule it is very important to stick to it seven days a week. This will increase our 'sleep efficiency' – which is really important.

Our sleep efficiency is simply a measure of the proportion of time that we spend in bed actually asleep. We can calculate it by dividing the number of hours of sleep by the number of hours we spend in bed. So, for example, if I go to bed at 10.00 pm, fall asleep at 11.30 pm, wake at 5.30 am and get up at 8.00am my sleep efficiency is: 6 divided by 10 (0.6). If we multiply this figure by 100, this gives us a percentage – 60%. This is not very efficient sleeping!

If, after sleep scheduling, I am able to go to bed at midnight, fall asleep immediately and wake at 6.00 am, getting up as soon as I wake, my sleep efficiency is then: 6 divided by 6 (1) – and multiplied by 100 this gives me 100% efficiency!
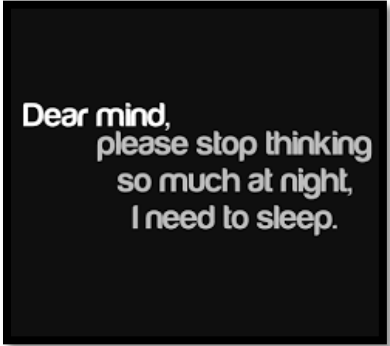
The aim is to increase our sleep efficiency to at least 90%. Once we have done this, we can gradually begin to spend longer in bed, careful to maintain our sleep efficiency at around 90%.

Getting More Sleep – as Much as I Need

Once your sleep efficiency has been at 90% for a whole week then you can allow yourself another 15 minutes in bed (either move your threshold time 15 minutes earlier or move your anchor time 15 minutes later). Stick to this schedule for another week and if your sleep efficiency remains at 90% you can add another 15 minutes on to your time in bed. If, however, you find your sleep efficiency decreases then return to the earlier schedule until your efficiency once again stabilises at 90%. And so on . . .

It is very important to be strict with yourself and not increase your time in bed any faster than this – if you do you could be undoing all the good work you have done to date.

Eventually you will be getting as much sleep as you need (it might be less than you think – if you find your sleep efficiency decreasing every time you go over say 7 hours in bed, it might be that 7 hours is all you need).

Dear mind,
    please stop thinking
    so much at night,
    I need to sleep.

SUMMARY OF SLEEP SCHEDULING

- Do not go to bed until your chosen threshold time, and only go then if you are feeling 'sleepy tired'
- If you are not asleep within 15-20 minutes, get back out of bed and leave the room
- Do not go back to bed until you are once again feeling 'sleepy tired'
- If you still do not fall asleep within 15-20 minutes, get back out of bed and leave the room
- Do not go back to bed until you are once again feeling 'sleepy tired'
- Repeat as necessary
- If you wake during the night and do not fall asleep within 15-20 minutes, get out of bed and leave the room
- Do not go back to bed until you are once again feeling 'sleepy tired'
- Get up in the morning at your anchor time (no matter how little sleep you have had)
- Do not nap at all during the day or evening
- Follow this programme 7 days a week (no lie-ins, even at weekends!)

Setting up Your New Routine

It is really helpful to plan ahead. 'Old habits die hard' and it makes it easier for us to change if we have planned in advance how to overcome obstacles.

It is important, therefore, to think about how we are going to occupy all that extra time that we used to spend lying in bed, tossing, and turning and probably being pretty unhappy. We need to find something relaxing and pleasant to do – some choose reading or listening to music, some prefer jigsaw puzzles or word puzzles, and others like to be creative and take up knitting or crochet or card-making. Remember that whatever we do, it should be relaxing and pleasant – and for most people scrubbing the kitchen floor and doing an oil-change on the car do not fall in those categories!

Plan ahead and expect to spend a fair amount of time out of bed for the first few nights at least. Keep the heating on in one room if you can; prepare a hot, milky drink before going to bed and leave it ready in a vacuum flask; borrow some extra books from the library, leave out your puzzle book or jigsaw or have your craft materials set out ready to use.

And importantly we need to work out how to ensure that we will get out of bed at our anchor time – unsurprisingly this can be very difficult. We might need to invest in an extra alarm clock, or to enlist the help of a partner or friend, perhaps to gently remind us, or to phone us, or even to tip a bucket of cold water over us! Similarly, we might need help to not doze off in front of the telly in the evening. If there is no-one around to prod us awake, standing up and going for a gentle walk around the house, or phoning a friend for a chat, can help to keep us awake.

The hardest thing of all can be to keep our motivation up. When we start sleep scheduling, we are asking a lot of ourselves. Changing habits is never easy, and sleep scheduling requires some hefty changes – who wants to get out of bed in the middle of the night? If we're tired and it's the weekend of course we allow ourselves a lie-in . . .

We might have tried to make changes helpful for our sleep in the past and not succeeded, and this makes it even harder to persevere now. If we dwell on these experiences, we are more likely to give up or not even try. But, if we can replace unhelpful thoughts like 'I am never going to get a good night's sleep – this will never work' with helpful thoughts like 'This is tough, but I am going to stick with it – it will be worth it in the end' this will help to keep us going.

And remember, these changes **are** worthwhile because if we can stick with them in the short-term we **will** be able to establish a good, healthy sleeping pattern. Once we have done that, we can go to bed and get up whenever we want to, we can read in bed if we wish, or doze in the armchair when TV gets boring . . . and still be sure of getting a good night's sleep

SLEEP DIARY

	Time Fell Asleep	Time Woke Up	**A** Hours/Minutes Between Times	**B** Minutes Awake in Night	A Minus B (Hrs/min)	Time Went to Bed	Time Got Up	Hours/ Minutes
	TIME SLEEPING					**TIME IN BED**		
DAY 1								
DAY 2								
DAY 3								
DAY 4								
DAY 5								
DAY 6								
DAY 7								
Total weekly sleeping time:						**Total weekly time in bed:**		
Total weekly sleeping time ÷ 7 = **Average time asleep:**						Total weekly time in bed ÷ 7 = **Average time in bed:**		
Average time asleep ÷ Average time in bed x 100 = **Sleep Efficiency:**								

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