

TROUBLE SLEEPING?

IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF
SOME SUPPORT, THIS
SELF-HELP BOOK CAN
HELP YOU COPE BETTER
WITH SLEEPING.

A BETTER YOU, FOR A
**BRIGHTER
TOMORROW**


wellbeing
services south glasgow

SLEEP PROBLEMS SELF-HELP BOOKLET

This booklet covers a wide range of topics related to sleep problems. It is split into four sections. Each section contains a lot of information. To gain the most benefit from this booklet, we would advise you to read one section at a time until you fully understand that section.

Have a look at each section, then focus on the parts which seem most useful to you.

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Some of these sections will be relevant to you, but there may also be parts which are not. There are various tasks throughout this booklet to help you identify your sleep problems, and to help you learn new ways of dealing with them. These tasks are identified by 'Stop & Think'. To gain the most from this booklet it is important to take some time to think about the questions asked, and to complete the tasks. It may be that it takes several readings of it before you start to write things down. That's OK, just take your time.

Don't worry if you are having difficulty with some of the ideas in the booklet. Just remember you are learning a new skill and it will take time and practice to learn to deal with your sleep problems. Take your time, and praise yourself for every step you take. It can be helpful to get support from a friend or family member – so you may want to let them read this booklet.



SECTION 1: WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SLEEP PROBLEMS?

When people experience sleep problems there are a number of areas which may become affected. They may not be sleeping for long enough, have poor quality sleep, have difficulty falling asleep, or be waking up too early in the morning. People can experience only one of these sleep problems, a few or sometimes all of them.

People who suffer from sleep problems often describe the sleep they do get as useless, not waking up feeling refreshed and feel very restless throughout the night. This may affect how they function during the day, often leaving them feeling tired, irritable, and lacking concentration. Problems at work, in their relationships and general quality of life are also possible.

WHO EXPERIENCES SLEEP PROBLEMS?

Sleep problems can happen to people of all ages but are more common in people who are in their mid to late stages of life. Women are more likely to develop sleep problems but they are also experienced by men. At least 1 in 10 people suffer from sleep problems on a regular basis and it is estimated that 25% of the population experience sleep problems occasionally. Below are a couple of examples:

Kelly works for a large supermarket chain and has an unpredictable work rota. Sometimes she can be on the late shift, coming home as late as 11pm and going in for the early shift at 7am the next morning. She finds that when she comes home, she can't relax and fall asleep before 1am as her mind is still on the go and she has to wake up at 5.30am to make it into work early enough. Even when Kelly's work rota is more stable, she finds it difficult to fall asleep and often wakes up throughout the night or very early in the morning.

The above example shows that not only are Kelly's working hours difficult, but at times her body does not get enough sleep once work is over.

It is understandable that when there are high demands at work, sleep will not be a priority. The problem comes when the lack of sleep continues when the work schedule has returned to normal.

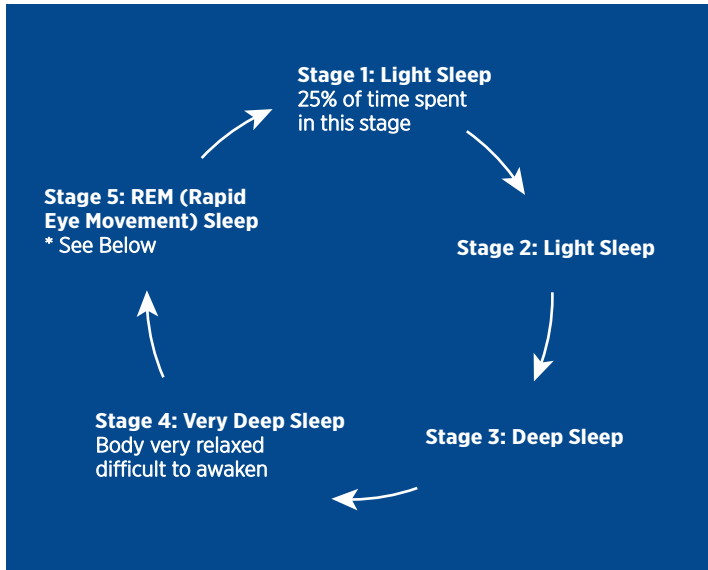
David split up from his wife 6 months ago. He has not slept well since the split and finds that he is generally tired all day, feels stressed and has low mood. David finds it hard to work through the day and has had to call in sick to work a number of times. He is napping during the day and lies in bed awake all night thinking about how his marriage didn't work and what he could have done differently. Due to feeling stressed, David has started to drink more alcohol and finds himself waking up early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep.



The previous example shows how sleep can be disturbed when you experience a stressful life event: in David's case his marriage breaking up. Generally, your sleep should fall back to its normal pattern once the stress in your life has calmed down. Although David's sleep problems started from stress in his life, he became more stressed and low in mood due to his disturbed sleep pattern. To cope he turned to alcohol, which although helped him fall asleep quickly, affected the quality of sleep he got making him wake up early in the morning.

I will return to the examples of Kelly and David throughout the booklet.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING SLEEP?



** Body paralysed. This occurs several times in a night – when it's over sleep goes back to stage one.*

It is estimated that we go through the 5 stages of sleep 4–5 times a night and that each sleep cycle lasts for roughly 90 minutes. People who suffer from sleep problems spend less of their sleep cycle in Stage 4 and the REM stage of sleep, meaning that they are not getting the deepest levels of sleep.

HOW MUCH SLEEP IS ENOUGH?

How many clouds are in the sky? On average, people sleep between 7–9 hours a night. This doesn't mean that everyone must be sleeping between 7–9 hours or that if they don't it means they have problems with too little sleep. Each person will find a level of sleep that is enough for them to wake up, feel refreshed and not feel tired during the day. Some people can function well with only 5–6 hours of sleep a day; others need up to 10 hours. It is important that you find your own level.

WHAT CAUSES SLEEP PROBLEMS?

There are several causes of sleep problems.

Shift patterns and travelling: Sleep problems can occur simply because your shift patterns at work have changed or through travelling (jet lag). Like the example of Kelly, working long hours or flexible shift patterns can disrupt your sleep. To make sure you have a good quality sleep, a regular sleeping routine is necessary. When travelling, especially across time zones, your body clock goes out of sync and takes a few days to readjust. After a few days, your sleep patterns should return to normal.

Physical and/or mental health difficulties: Sleep problems can also occur if you have other problems, for example, physical and/or mental health difficulties. If you have recently had an operation, or have injured yourself, you could be experiencing a lot of pain which may disturb your sleep. If you have mental health difficulties, for example, depression or anxiety, you might find yourself thinking or constantly worrying when you're trying to fall asleep. People who tend to be 'worriers' find it hard to rest their mind and unwind, which stops them from feeling relaxed and able to get to sleep. As a result people may get trapped in a vicious cycle of sleep problems as lack of sleep leads to more worry which can, in turn, make sleep problems worse.



Stressful life events: If you have recently had a stressful life event, for example, losing a loved one, a break-up (e.g. the example of David), moving home or taking important exams, your sleep may be disturbed. Generally your sleep will go back to normal once the stress has reduced, but some people will continue to have difficulty sleeping.

Bedtime routine and surrounding factors: Poor bedtime routine can also cause sleep problems. If you nap during the day, it is very likely that you will not sleep well at night. Going to bed too early may result in you lying in bed awake for a long time before falling asleep or waking up early and feeling tired later in the day.

Environmental factors can also cause sleep problems, for example, if you live on a noisy street, have an uncomfortable bed, or curtains that let light in.

Medication: Certain medications can also contribute to sleep problems, for example steroids and blood pressure medication. Certain cold medications have caffeine in them that acts as a stimulant, check the back of the pack to make sure.

Although sleeping tablets may seem like a good idea, they can actually make your sleep problems worse. It is possible to become addicted to sleeping tablets and they should only be used short-term.

Unhealthy Lifestyle: A poor diet and unhealthy lifestyle can lead to sleep problems. If you eat lots of sugary food or drink caffeinated drinks later in the day, this can stop you from falling asleep. Eating a large meal late at night can also have this effect.

You should also avoid drinking alcohol as a way to help you sleep. While alcohol may help you fall asleep more quickly, the quality of sleep you get is poor and you will most likely wake up early in the morning still feeling tired. Also, while it has been shown that regular exercise will help you sleep better, exercising late at night will prevent you from falling asleep as you will still have an adrenaline rush.



STOP & THINK

What difficulties do you have?

Take a moment to think about your situation and whether any of these things apply to you:

DIFFICULTY

Working shifts	
Travelling	
Stressful life events	
Physical health problems	
Mental health problems	
Bedtime routine	
Surrounding factors: e.g. noise, uncomfortable bed	
Medication	
Unhealthy lifestyle	
Any others:	

Have you identified anything? You may already have thought of things you can do but here are a few tips which may help:



SECTION 2: WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY SLEEP PROBLEMS?

In the last section we saw that a number of factors cause sleep problems. In this section we will focus on the things you can change in order to improve sleep.

BEDROOM

- Your bedroom should be for sleeping only, it's not a place to eat or do work. You want to go to your bedroom at night and associate it with sleeping
- Make sure your bedroom is well ventilated; not too hot and stuffy or too cold as this could wake you up in the middle of the night
- If you have an uncomfortable bed, buy a new mattress if you can afford it
- Make sure your curtains are well lined and don't allow in the early morning light. If they aren't, consider lining them or get an eye mask
- If you live in a busy neighbourhood or on a busy street, buy some ear plugs to block out the noise

BEDTIME ROUTINE

- Only go to bed if you're relaxed and sleepy
- Try to go to bed around the same time each night and wake up around the same time each morning, even if you don't fall asleep till late
- Try to avoid taking daytime naps; this will make it harder for you to sleep at night time
- If you aren't falling asleep, get out of bed and go into another room. Do something relaxing and calming like reading, or listen to music, and only return to bed when you're feeling sleepy again. If you're not asleep again within 15-20 minutes repeat this process
- Create a 'bedtime routine' to prepare your body for sleep, for example, wash your face, brush and floss your teeth etc

MIND

- Try not to clock watch. Put the clock out of view. Checking it all the time will make your worries and stress worse which may increase the chance of you having unhelpful thoughts and muddle your mind
- If you are going through a stressful time in your life, try to set some time aside to go over and straighten out your stress and worries so that you don't lie in bed worrying

EATING, DRINKING AND BEHAVIOURS

- Try to spend some time relaxing before going to bed, read a book or watch TV. Avoid doing work before going to bed
- Try not to eat before going to bed, or if you do just have a light snack
- If you find that you wake up a lot during the night to go to the bathroom, try to drink less in the evening
- Avoid caffeine later in the day, it works as a stimulant and keeps you awake. Look out for hidden caffeine that is in chocolate, fizzy drinks etc
- Don't rely on alcohol as a night-cap. Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but you will wake up in the middle of the night or early in the morning and struggle to get back to sleep. Also, the quality of sleep you get is very poor
- Try to exercise regularly but don't exercise too close to bedtime





STOP & THINK

Making changes to your sleeping habits

It might be helpful for you to complete the task below which will allow you to start planning the steps you may need to take to help improve your sleep.

DAVID'S CHANGES YOUR CHANGES

Easiest	Stop taking naps during the day	
	Get out of bed when I can't fall asleep	
Hardest	Tackle my worrying thoughts	
	Cut down on drinking before bed	

TIPS FOR PRACTICE

- Set daily goals and targets
- Expect to find it difficult, but try not to give up
- Just trying it once won't be enough you might have to practise the same changes
- It's better not to leave big gaps between practising these changes. Try to do a bit every day

lots of times on different days so be prepared to keep at it

Making these simple changes can really help to improve your sleep. There are also a number of techniques you can learn which may help further.

RELAXATION

Relaxation is a very useful way of coping with sleeping problems. Sleep can be affected by tension and stress and you may be experiencing the physical symptoms of stress. When someone has been stressed for a long time they are often unaware of the tension in their muscles, or the knot in their stomach, which is a result of the body's reaction to stress.

When we are stressed, the muscles in our bodies tense up and this can cause uncomfortable bodily feelings like headaches, backaches, or tightness in the chest. The aches and pains of tension can cause mental worry, making us even more anxious and tense. Problems with tension and stress can contribute to a delay in getting to sleep and disrupted sleep through the night.

WHY IS RELAXATION HELPFUL?

- Relaxing slows down the body
- If we learn to turn on the symptoms of relaxation we can turn off the symptoms of tension. You can't experience both at the same time
- With practice, you can control the physical symptoms associated with anxiety
- When you have learned to relax it can make a big difference to your mood and your energy, not just when you are feeling tense and highly strung but at other times too
- Relaxation can help to reduce muscle tension which can help to control worrying thoughts

WAYS THAT YOU CAN HELP YOURSELF RELAX:

- Try breathing slowly and evenly – it will take a couple of minutes before you feel relaxed. It may make it easier if you say the word 'in' when you breathe in and 'relax' when you breathe out, as this can help you get into a rhythm
- Relax your muscles to avoid tenseness
- Avoid fidgeting
- Keep your concentration on your surroundings – **the 'here and now'**
- Stay calm and don't rush

If you do these things, you should find yourself slowly calming down. It might help to close your eyes briefly, and just slow down, and think.

"Relax, I can deal with this."

Talking to yourself in a positive way can be helpful, and you may want to say other statements to yourself- such as **'keep calm'** or **'it will pass'**.



RELAX YOUR BODY

There are many forms of relaxation you can try. One form of relaxation is to relax your body (sometimes known as 'Progressive Muscular Relaxation') this involves tensing and relaxing all the major muscle groups in the body. If you are interested in learning about this technique, and other relaxation techniques ring Wellbeing Services on **0141 232 2555** and request the 'Relaxation' CD, and we will send them out to you.

RELAX YOUR MIND

Another technique is to relax your mind by imagining a pleasant scene. This can be any image you find relaxing – you can create your own through your memories, something new, or something you've seen in a film, book or photograph you have. Think about this image in a lot of detail, what's going on around you and more importantly how do you feel (what do you see, hear, smell, feel or taste). Remember to keep breathing slowly and evenly.

CHANGING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

Another technique which may help is to work on any unhelpful thoughts you may be having when trying to sleep. Within this section we will look at these thoughts and then try and challenge them so that they stop affecting your sleep.



STOP & THINK

In the table below are some examples of unhelpful thoughts that people have when they cannot sleep. Yours may not be exactly the same but see if you identify with any of them. Sometimes thoughts can come in the form of images or pictures in your head, write these down if you notice these. Put a tick next to any thoughts that are similar to ones you have been having.

THOUGHT

"I have only slept for 6 hours, I should be sleeping for 8 hours a night, I'm definitely going to be tired."

"I shouldn't have said that, they'll think I'm stupid."

"If I don't sleep well I will not cope with the day tomorrow"

"Here we go again, another bad night, I'll never sleep well again."

"I've been awake since 3am and I've got to get up in three hours."

"I'm in so much pain, it's always going to be hard for me to sleep with my back like this."

"What would happen if I was so tired that I couldn't do my job/look after the kids?"

"Am I doing my job well enough at the moment?"

"I'm sick of this, I never sleep well."

Any others:

Once you have identified unhelpful thoughts you experience when you are trying to sleep you can start to challenge them. Begin by looking down the list of the types of thoughts you have and pick the one which troubles you the most.

There are a number of techniques you can use to challenge your thoughts, different ones may work for different types of thoughts.

TACKLING THOUGHTS

As we have seen, some worrying thoughts can keep us awake at night and disrupt our sleeping pattern. Clearing up your thoughts can help improve sleep, by learning a more helpful and balanced way of viewing your situation. When you have come up with a more balanced view of your situation, this may help to ease your mind, therefore making it easier for you to get to sleep.





STOP & THINK

Have a go at identifying your own thoughts and answering them in a different way. Use the tips below the table to help you straighten out your thoughts.

UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS HELPFUL THOUGHTS

<i>"I'm never going to get to sleep tonight."</i>	<i>"I am trying to use techniques to improve my sleep. I always manage to get some sleep which is probably for longer than I think."</i>
<i>"How can I go to work tomorrow – I'll not be able to concentrate."</i>	<i>"Even when I don't sleep well I can usually concentrate well and haven't taken any days off because of my sleep problems. I might feel tired but that doesn't mean I can't do my job."</i>

TIPS FOR FINDING HELPFUL THOUGHTS

- Think about what you would say to a friend or family member who had these thoughts. Also think about what your friends or family members would say to you about these thoughts
- Think about the reasons why this thought is unhelpful and what are some alternative thoughts you could think about in this situation?

Keep reminding yourself of the more helpful thoughts when the original thought pops into your mind.

TACKLING WORRIES ABOUT THE DAY

This technique involves going through what has happened during that day, thinking about the things you were happy with but also the things you were not happy with. After you've done this you can plan when you are going to work on or untwist the things that are worrying you. Here's an idea of how to go about it:

- Take time every evening and sit where you won't be disturbed
- Have a notebook to jot down what has happened in the day, how it's gone and how you feel about the kind of day it's been. Think about things that have gone well and that have not gone so well
- Write down what you can do about the things that are worrying you. Think of it as a 'to do' list that helps you to get things organised in your mind to help reduce your worry

- Now think about tomorrow and what you will be doing. Think about what you are looking forward to and also what you are worried about
- Write down your plan for the day. If there is anything you are worried about put some time aside in the day to work through some steps to reduce your worry
- Now close the notebook and in doing so close the day. When you go to bed, remind yourself that you have already dealt with everything and planned to tackle some of the problems – this means you don't need to worry at this time
- If new things come into your mind note them down so that you can deal with them the next day

DEVELOPING A 'MANTRA'

If unhelpful thoughts keep coming into your mind and you find it hard to challenge them, another way to help is to develop a mantra or something to say to yourself instead of the unhelpful thought. This is also good for when you wake up in the night and your mind starts racing with thoughts. It works in a similar way to 'counting sheep'.

Start by thinking of a word which has no emotions or meaning linked with it and is simple and calming, some people find the word 'relax' or 'calm' helpful. Repeat this in your head over and over. This will quieten your mind helping you drift off to sleep.

RETRAINING YOUR SLEEP PATTERN

This is a technique (also known as 'sleep restriction therapy') which has been found to be very successful in reducing sleep problems. Often when people suffer from sleep problems, they make up for it by spending more time in bed.

Studies have found that many people sleep more than they think, sometimes just as much as people without sleep problems. Despite this spending more time in bed can mean that you get a poorer quality of sleep and wake up more often.

The idea behind this technique is to retrain your body clock to become more effective. This can be hard at first as you may get even less sleep which may make your problems worse – but this is short-term. In the longer term (usually a couple of weeks) you should start to get into a much more effective sleeping pattern.

Many people don't believe this will work and don't want to try it, but it has been shown to be very helpful.





STOP & THINK

How to get started

Choose a week which is a bit quieter than normal to give yourself the best chance of success. Next, work out how much you sleep on an average night. By seeing how much you sleep you will be able to decide how much time you should be spending in bed at the moment – anything else will be interfering with how effective your sleep is.

David looked at his sleeping pattern and worked out that because he goes to bed at 11 and gets up at 7 he is in bed for roughly 8 hours. However because it takes him 1.5 hours to get to sleep and he wakes up half hour before his alarm, he's only getting 6 hours sleep.

HERE'S HOW DAVID WORKED IT OUT: STEP 1: HOW LONG DO I SPEND IN BED?

- I go to bed at **11pm**
- I get out of bed at **7am**
- Work out the number of hours in-between this time **8 hours**

STEP 2: HOW MUCH OF THIS TIME AM I AWAKE?

- It takes me **1 hour 30 minutes** to get to sleep
- I wake up **30 minutes** before getting out of bed
- Add these 2 numbers up **2 hours**

STEP 3: HOW LONG AM I ACTUALLY SLEEPING?

Take the amount of time awake from the amount of time spent in bed (**8 hours - 2 hours**) = **6 hours**. This is the actual amount David is sleeping despite spending 8 hours in bed.

David therefore decided he would restrict his time in bed to 6 hours at first. He decided not to go to bed any later than midnight which meant that he would rise at 6am. He then agreed to stick to this for a week.

(You may find that you wake during the night. If so, try to estimate how much time you are awake for and add that into your calculation).

NOW TRY AND UNRAVEL YOURS: STEP 1: HOW LONG DO I SPEND IN BED?

- I go to bed at _____
- I get out of bed at _____

Work out the number of hours in-between this time _____

STEP 2: HOW MUCH OF THIS TIME AM I AWAKE?

- It takes me _____ minutes/hours to get to sleep
- I wake up _____ minutes/hours before I get out of bed
- I wake up through the night for a total of _____ minutes/hours.
- Add these numbers up _____

STEP 3: HOW LONG AM I ACTUALLY SLEEPING?

Now take the amount of time awake from the amount of time spent in bed, this will show you how much you're actually sleeping on an average night.

Working this out shows you how much time you should be spending in bed every night. Now decide on a sensible amount of time to be in bed and **stick to it**.

It is important to keep this up even though it is hard and you will be feeling tired. After a week you should begin to see some changes; waking up less often, having deeper sleep and/or waking in the morning feeling more refreshed.

After you have done this for a while you can start to increase how long you're in bed and therefore how long you sleep at night. It is important that you take your time increasing your sleep gradually so that your body gets used to the changes. Most people find that increasing the time in bed by 30 minutes each week is the most helpful. After a few weeks you should see what the best amount of time asleep for you is – usually this is between 6 and 8 hours. The easiest way to know when you've found this is when it starts to take you longer to get to sleep. At this point just reduce the length of time slightly.



SECTION 3: SUMMARY AND REVIEW

Many people have problems with sleeping at some point in their life. By using this booklet you have taken the first step to tackle your problems with sleep.

As we have seen there are a number of techniques you can use:

- Thinking about practical changes you can make e.g. temperature of the room, diet
- Using more in depth techniques such as:
 - Unwinding
 - Tackling thoughts
 - Retraining your sleep pattern

As you continue working on your sleep problems, remember to stop and see how you are doing. You may be using a lot of new skills, and these need practice. It's always good to step back sometimes and say *"how's it actually going?"*

One way of doing this is keeping track of your progress; try thinking about things that went well, times when you didn't do as well, what you have tried and how you got on.

Many people find it useful to have a notebook to look back on and see what has changed.

It is important to be realistic about your improvement. It may take time to overcome sleep problems and to notice changes in it. You may find that your sleep has improved for some time and then it's disrupted again. This is to be expected, and it's important not to be put off by this.

WHEN PROBLEMS WON'T GO AWAY

Sometimes, there are times in our lives when the problem we face just cannot be solved. Examples are ageing, getting ill or the loss of a loved one: these are things we cannot really control or prevent.

There might be more complex issues which are stopping your sleep improving. This could be because of emotional problems like depression, or you may still be struggling to cope with important events in your past.

If you feel that this is the case there are other sources of help available – some of these things may be offered by Wellbeing Services. Your GP may also be able to offer advice or there are other organisations which you can go to for support either in person, on the phone or via online access using a computer. Some of these are listed at the end of this booklet.



Further help and information

For more information or advice please contact Wellbeing Services on **0141 232 2555** or visit the website **www.wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk**

Wellbeing Services is a Primary Care Mental Health Team based in the South of Glasgow. Wellbeing Services offer a variety of services to assist people with common mental health problems and helps them see a brighter tomorrow.



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