BETTER SLEEP

SESSION 1 COURSE WORKBOOK

NHS
Greater Glasgow and Clyde

wellbeing

THE BETTER SLEEP PROGRAMME

This programme will give you information about the nature of sleep, plus useful, tried-and-tested techniques to improve sleep quantity and quality. We hope that this will enable you to develop a better, healthier sleep pattern.

The programme has been carefully evaluated and shown to be an effective method of treating insomnia.

There will be a total of five sessions – one a week over five weeks – and it is important that you attend all of them. Each session will cover a different area and it would not be helpful for you to miss any.

SESSION ONE

Sleep Information

Why do we sleep? What is sleep?

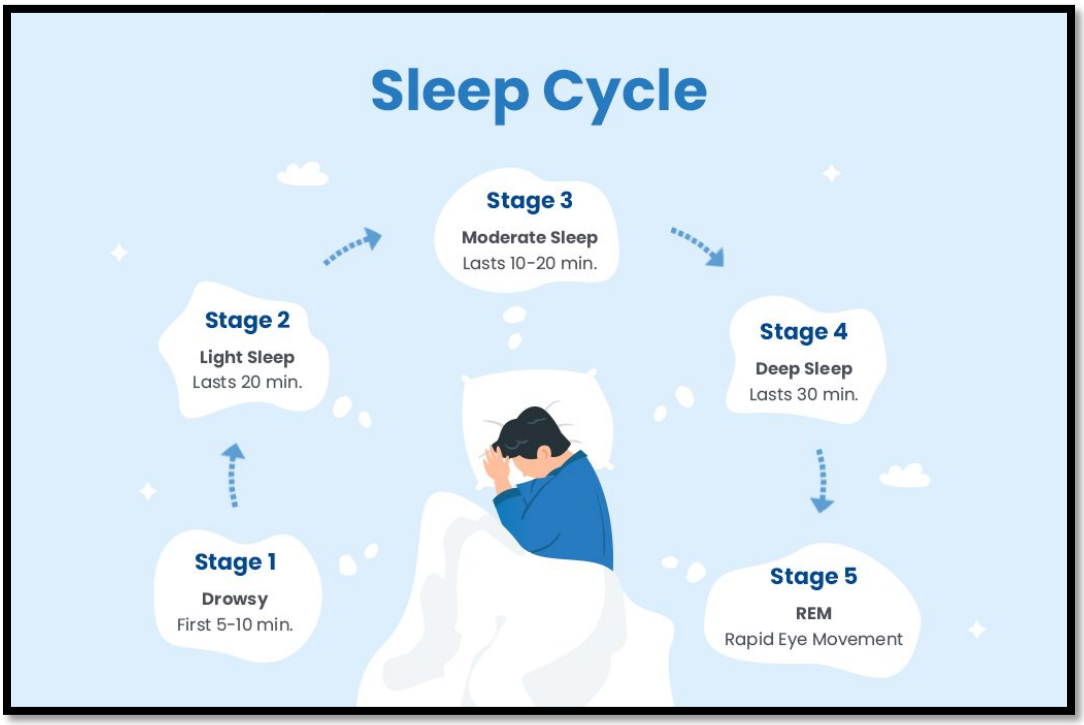
Sleep is a very important time when, although we are not aware of it, a lot is going on.

We need sleep for:

- Physical rest: our bodies need sleep so that they can recover from the day's activities – just being alive and active drains our resources, and it is when we are deeply asleep that our bodies repair and refresh themselves. The more active we are, the more rest we require.

- Mental rest: our minds continue to work for brief spells while we are asleep. It is thought that when we dream, we are sorting out things that have happened to us during the day and storing memories of these. Therefore, we can become forgetful if we are not enjoying good quality sleep.

We have different types of sleep throughout the night. There are four stages in sleep. As you will see from the diagram below, we start off in very light sleep and go down through the different stages until we are in very deep sleep. We then gradually return to very light sleep, until we are almost awake again, and then we once again go back down into deep sleep. This usually happens twice at the start of a night's sleep and then, although our sleep continues to cycle through lighter and deeper sleep, we tend to stay in the lighter two stages for the rest of the night.



Stage 1 sleep: very light sleep. When we are in stage 1 sleep we think we are awake! We can look at a clock and see the time, can usually answer a question if someone asks us something and some people can even read - though will have no memory of this when they wake the following morning.

Stage 2 sleep: still light sleep. It is when we pass from stage 1 to stage 2 that we think of ourselves as falling asleep. If we are woken in stage 2 sleep many of us will deny having been asleep.

Stage 3 sleep: deeper sleep. It is harder to wake someone at this stage, and, if woken, we will know that we were sleeping.

Stage 4 sleep (REM): very deep sleep. It is difficult to rouse someone at this stage.

Stage 5 sleep: we dream throughout the night, mostly when we are in stage 1 sleep, and only remember our dreams if we wake shortly after having them.

What happens in the different stages?

It is when we are in deep sleep (stages 3 and 4) that our muscles get the rest that they need and our bodies can repair the damage that we do to ourselves just by being alive and active. This is the sleep that is essential for good physical health.

Our minds get the rest that they need throughout the night, though they actually work quite hard during dreaming sleep. It is thought that when we are dreaming, our minds are sorting out what has happened to us during the day and storing memories.

So, as long as we get three to four hours' sleep a night, we are getting all the sleep that we need to stay healthy (because we are usually in stage 3 and 4 in the first few hours of sleep). However, if this is all we get, then we are missing out on some of the rest our minds need and a lot of our 'admin' time too! This is why we often feel tired and drained, and can be irritable and forgetful, if we don't get enough sleep.

How much sleep do we need?

This varies across our lifetimes. Babies and young children need much more sleep than adults (12 – 18 hours a night) and as they are doing a lot of growing and a lot of learning they have more deep sleep and more dreaming sleep also.

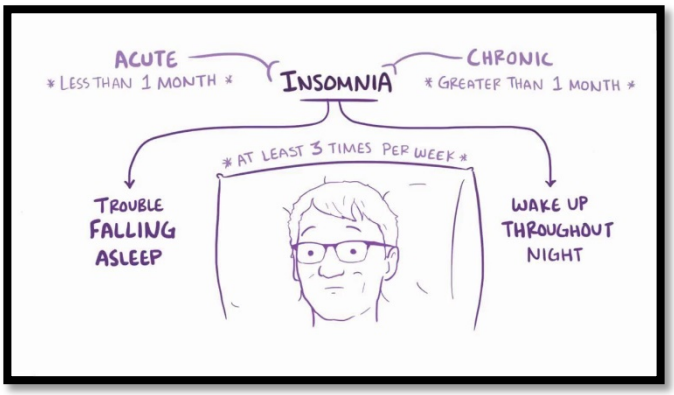
It is thought that the average adult (without insomnia) sleeps for about 7 – 8 hours a night – but this can vary: some people do well on 4 or 5 hours, others need up to 10 to feel fully rested.

As we get older, we tend to become less active and are learning less (we already know it all!) therefore we need less sleep. So, although as young adults we might

have needed a good 8 hours, once we move past middle age we might be fully refreshed after 6 or 7 hours.

We can survive and function well without very much sleep (for limited periods) – round-the-world solo yachtsmen and women sleep for only 4 hours in 24 for months on end (and you have to be in good physical and mental condition to navigate solo round the Cape of Good Hope!).

What is insomnia?



The technically correct definition of insomnia is 'difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep which has become persistent – i.e. on at least 4 out of 7 nights and has been present for more than 6 months.

Most of us will develop a temporary sleep problem at some point in our lives (new baby, illness etc) but this can often resolve when our circumstances change. However, for many of us it can become prolonged and persistent. And the longer we have a sleep problem the more difficult it seems to be to sort it out. Often this is because we almost instinctively do the wrong things to try and help ourselves and these can become bad habits.

When we have a sleep problem, we may find it impossible to 'switch our minds off' and fall asleep, and may spend many hours tossing and turning. We may wake frequently during the night and might awaken with the dawn chorus and find it impossible to get back to sleep. And yet on other nights we might sleep well. What makes it so frustrating is that we never know when we are going to get a good night's sleep.

We don't have accurate figures, but it is estimated that somewhere between 20 and 40% of the adult population are suffering sleep difficulties at any one time. Recognising that you are not on your own can sometimes help a bit – knowing that, when you are lying wide awake at 3 o'clock in the morning, the chances are that around a quarter of your neighbours are also staring at the ceiling and sighing (or worse!).

What causes insomnia?

All sorts of things can disrupt our regular sleep pattern. Stress and strain can produce short-term sleep problems which can develop into longer-term problems because bad sleeping habits develop or worries about sleeping start to take over. Depression and anxiety can bring on sleeplessness (but sleeplessness can also cause depression and anxiety!).

Life changes (even desirable ones, such as moving house or changing jobs) shift-work (always trying to adapt to different work/sleep patterns) an uncomfortable bed, night-time noise, and, of course, pain or discomfort can all disrupt our sleep. How we eat can also lead to sleep problems – gaining or losing a lot of weight rapidly may disturb our hormonal balance and affect our sleep, and eating at the wrong times (perhaps to suit a partner working different shifts) can also be unhelpful.

Strangely enough, sleeping pills often actually make our sleep worse, although they can seem helpful at first. They alter the type of sleep we get and we can quickly become dependent on them. It can be very difficult to stop taking them once we have started.

Does insomnia cause harm?

Although it is distressing and can be depressing, the body is designed to handle some sleeplessness. There is some evidence that long-term sleep deprivation may eventually damage our health – which is why it is important to deal with it and regain a healthy sleeping pattern.

Insomnia can lead to daytime problems: poor concentration, daytime tiredness and irritability and this can obviously affect others in the household too. If we are seriously sleep-deprived this can be dangerous – but not in terms of our bodily processes. There is no truth in the myth that if someone is deprived of sleep for long enough they will die. However, if we have had very little, or no, sleep, we should not drive, operate heavy machinery or do anything else potentially dangerous that requires a high level of concentration.

Thoughts that run through our heads about the potential harmfulness of lack of sleep (e.g. ‘I’ll make myself ill’) are likely to make our insomnia worse.

Measuring our Sleep

It is important to keep a record of our sleep pattern – it is only by doing this that we can identify exactly what our problem is, and then keep track of any improvements as and when they happen.

HOME PRACTICE

Remember to complete your diary first thing every morning. If you leave it till later on in the day you will be much less accurate in your recall of wake-times etc. Once you have got into the habit of doing it, you will find it very easy to continue – and, we hope, very useful!

Try to notice next time you are worrying about your sleep and challenge any worries you might have.

Remember clock-watching isn't helpful – try not to do it.

Session One: Tasks

What do you know about sleep? Try the quiz!

	TRUE	FALSE
People need a lot less sleep in later life		
Sleep is pretty much the same all the night through		
We should try to make up for all our lost sleep on subsequent nights		
Dreaming is usually a sign of emotional upset		
Sleep is important for emotional processing		
The more sleep you can get the better you will feel the next day		
Feeling irritable during the day probably means our sleep quality is poor		
Most adults sleep 7-8 hours at night		
There is no such thing as 'deep sleep'. It is just a manner of speech.		
Daytime tiredness may be an important sign of a sleep disorder		
Sleep problems usually pass away quite quickly		
Most people don't cope very well after a bad night's sleep		
Sleeping pills are addictive		
The amount of sleep you need varies from person to person		

How much sleep do you think you need right now?

☐ HOURS PER NIGHT (MY ESTIMATE)

What do you think may have caused or now contributes to your insomnia?

Note down some possible causes or triggers:

What worries do you have about your insomnia? Are they justified?

My worries about sleep and sleeplessness are:

A more accurate version of the thoughts would be:

SLEEP DIARY

	TIME SLEEPING					TIME IN BED		
	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
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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