

Chapter 3

SLEEP MANAGEMENT





Good refreshing sleep is vital for our wellbeing.

In this chapter, we will look at what causes disturbance to sleep patterns.

In the first part, we try to understand how poor sleep can affect our energy levels and moods and how we can deal with them.

In the second part, we look at unhelpful habits that interfere with sleep and how to replace these with healthy ones.



SLEEP MANAGEMENT

You may find difficulty in maintaining a regular sleep pattern. For instance, maybe you...

- Have problems getting off to sleep?
- Wake up frequently during the night and find it difficult to get back to sleep?
- Wake up early in the morning and find it hard to get back to sleep again?
- Wake up feeling exhausted and un-refreshed ?



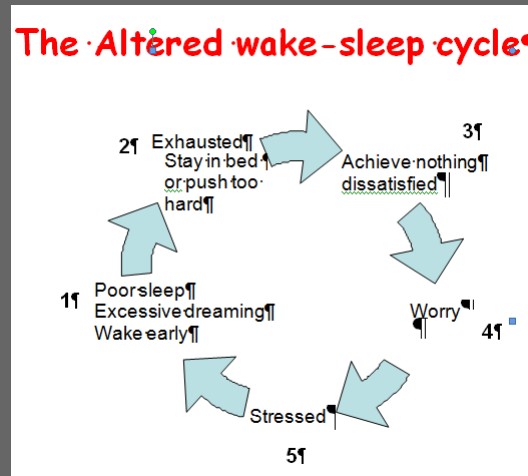
A poor sleep pattern may be a sign of excessive worry and/or distress.

It may also be a sign of unhelpful habits that can, with a little effort, be changed in favour of more beneficial ones.

Left unchecked, an altered wake-sleep cycle can, in some cases, lead to a downward spiral into depression.

This downward spiral is shown in the following diagram.

Try joining the cycle at sleep, position 1 on the left of the diagram and you may recognise the chain reaction that leads to problematic emotional states.



Waking early and exhausted after a disturbed night's sleep (1 & 2) makes it difficult to move through the next day.

This can be quite distressing to many people, and studies have shown that the "fight or flight" stress response (described in chapter 4) is more active (3).

This means we find it difficult to cope and our reactions to pressures of the day can be over-emotional (4).

This state can lead to excessive build up of arousal in the brain caused by negative and depressive thinking (5), and recent studies have shown that the brain, when asleep, discharges built-up emotional stress through the dreaming process. This is why the brain wakes the body up early - exhausted by its attempts to discharge the arousal - and can do no more. Waking up exhausted sets up the cycle for the next day.

This is why many people with depression report waking up early, feeling exhausted and lacking in motivation.

RESTORING A HEALTHY WAKE-SLEEP CYCLE

This course is about exploring an
interlinked set of skills
which can help break this cycle.

For example

You may notice substantial improvements to your
sleep pattern by:-

1. Simply understanding the cycle gives hope and possibility for improvement
2. Becoming more active (to help cope with fatigue)
3. Practising relaxation techniques (to cope with stress)
4. Finding distractions from worries and taking part in pleasurable activities.
5. Spending some time during the day, not evening, to jot down worries and to consider taking steps towards resolving them.
6. Reviewing what went well at the end of the day.
7. Achievement

RESTORING HEALTHY SLEEPING HABITS

Sleep patterns are based on:-

1. Habit

When you get used to doing something in a particular way or at a specific time, it becomes a habit.

For instance, if you are used to going to bed at 9pm, you will find it harder to go to bed earlier or later.

If you can get into a habit, you can get out of it - with a little time and persistence.



After all, it took you time to fall into the habit in the first place!

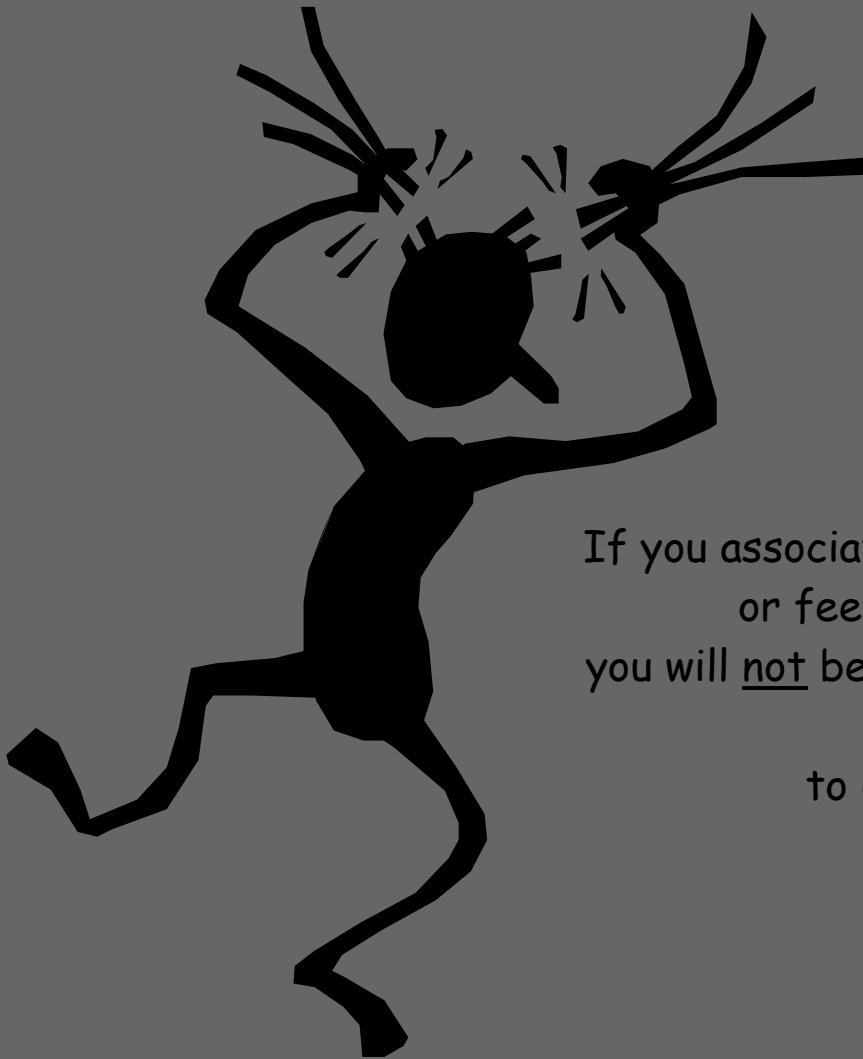
2. Sleep Association

Some common associations



These are all **associations** you have built up over time.
Like ham and eggs - they just go together.
As it says in the old song "you can't have one without the other."

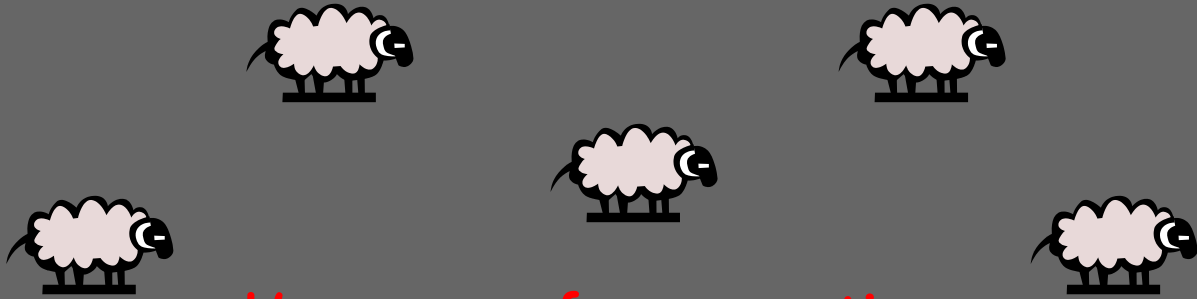
You may associate being in bed with tossing and turning, worrying about things or feeling uncomfortable, instead of associating it with sleep.



If you associate bed with being awake or feeling frustrated, you will not be in the best frame of mind to drop off!

This is a very common problem.

It can start when something happens that disrupts your normal sleeping pattern, such as -
a change in your job
or
family problems.



**Here are a few suggestions
that will help you restore a good sleep pattern.**

Practising helpful habits such as:-

- Go to bed at about the same time each night
- Set your alarm to get up at the same time each morning even if you are still tired. You can plan quiet rest periods through the day.
- Use a relaxation technique before or even once you are in bed.
- Develop a „getting to sleep“ routine in the evening (for instance, listening to calming music).

Associate the bedroom with sleep by:-

- Removing the television from the room.
- Making sure that the room is dark and the bed is comfortable and warm.



You will get better results by avoiding the following at bedtime

- Having a frustrating conversation or quarrel
- Having caffeine-based drinks such as tea or coffee which act as a stimulant
- Reading an exciting or work-related book
- Watching TV or eating in bed
- Using a computer just before bedtime
- Worrying when you are in bed
(Keep a note pad and pen by the bed if you are worried about forgetting anything. You can write yourself a reminder and then put it out of your head until morning.)

**But what if
you are really having difficulty falling asleep,
or staying asleep?**

Remember the possibility of negative associations...

After 30 minutes get up,
keep warm and do something calming, soothing, or even boring!!!

Something to remind yourself of daily

HABITS CAN BE CHANGED

BUT IT WILL TAKE TIME AND APPLICATION
TO TURN OLD HABITS AND ASSOCIATIONS AROUND.



To summarise: -

1. Sleep is vital to our health.
2. Understanding the sleep cycle and practising a daily routine of going to bed and getting up at consistent times is essential.
3. Plan regular rest breaks through the day to catch up on any lost sleep.
4. Practise good habits which are strongly associated with dropping off to sleep.