

Insomnia Introduction

Online Insomnia Management Program (OIMP) Introduction

This is an 8 week online program. The first week consists of following basic recommendations while you complete a short questionnaire each night before you go to bed and each morning after you get up. You can complete these questionnaires on your phone, tablet or computer. At the beginning of the second week you will be given a customized sleep program to follow. This program is modified each week as your sleep improves based on the evening and morning questionnaires that you fill in every day. You will be able to follow your progress on daily and weekly graphs and charts

By now you have probably read the section on *What Is Insomnia* and *Resolving Insomnia Without Drugs*, and followed the recommendations in the section on *Sleep Hygiene*. If you have not read these sections yet you should go back and do so to give you a better understanding of what insomnia is and how we can resolve it. These articles can be found under “Resources/Insomnia Therapies”.

You should have also completed the *Online Sleep Disorder Questionnaire* (OSDQ) to get a better idea of the type of insomnia you have and if you have symptoms of other sleep disorders or other factors affecting your sleep that need to be addressed. It is important for you to understand that you may have other sleep disorders besides insomnia and you will need to treat all your sleep disorders in order to feel rested.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBTi) is a well developed form of insomnia therapy that you can read about in the medical and psychological literature for yourself. The literature indicates that CBTi works for about 80% of patients with *Psychophysiological Insomnia* or “conditioned insomnia”. This is assuming that there are no other major aggravating factors such as uncontrolled chronic pain, depression or anxiety. CBTi may actually be better than medication at controlling insomnia. Although taking medication for insomnia is easier and works quicker, the body may become resistant to medication and the effects are gradually lost. Although CBTi requires more effort and takes longer, the benefits are often permanent.

Psychologists have traditionally been the professionals to conduct CBTi although many sleep disorder physicians and nurses have been trained in this form of treatment. Traditionally, treatment typically consists of four to eight 30 – 60 minute sessions over a period of a few months.

After more than 17 years of practicing sleep disorders medicine I have helped hundreds of patients resolve their insomnia and get off their sleeping pills using the principles found on this web site. In my busy sleep medicine practice, I could not afford the luxury of spending 60 minutes with each patient. Out of necessity, I distilled the program down to the essence of what works and is most important. I organized the information in a fashion that made sense to patients of all backgrounds. I also simplified the program so that it could be followed with a few minutes of your time every night. However, because the program is simplified to the essence of what is most important, it is critical that you follow each recommendation every night for it to be effective.

The Program

Most people who have had difficulty sleeping for a while are familiar with the usual Sleep Hygiene measures you can use to improve your sleep. This program goes beyond sleep hygiene and focuses on creating change through the principles of conditioning. What ever the initial triggers may have been for your sleep difficulties, after a while, poor sleep generally becomes a conditioned habit.

The *Online Insomnia Management Program* utilizes data from questionnaires and sleep logs to create a customized, interactive 8 week program to train you to become a better sleeper. As your sleep improves, the program adjusts. You can interact with the Program using your computer, tablet or smart phone. The program includes audio files for relaxation techniques that you can play when you go to bed to help you turn your mind off and fall asleep.

Most people notice significant improvement in the first month. The first two weeks are the most difficult because of some of the “hoops you have to jump through” to change your conditioning. However, if you can invest in this process, it can pay off for the rest of your life. For more information about how this program works, you can read the article entitled *The Principles And Process For Reconditioning Good Sleep.*

Sleep medication

If you are taking sleep aids more than 3 or 4 nights per week **and** you find they significantly improve the quality and quantity of sleep you get, then the program will work much better if you remain on these medications until you have become trained to be a good sleeper every night. Taking medication off and on results in sleeping better the nights you take medication and sleeping much worse the nights your don't. This results in your sleep being very inconsistent. However, to condition good sleep, you need to be consistent. If you frequently have bad nights because of not taking your sleeping pills, then your sleep conditioning will not improve. Therefore, if you are going to take a sleeping pill during this program, then you need to take it every night. If you are not going to take sleeping pills every night, then you should not take them at all. Remember, that once you are sleeping well and feeling rested we have protocol to get you off the sleeping pill. This protocol is can found in the article entitled *Getting Off Your Sleep Medication*. If you are going to use sleep medication, please also read the article entitled *How To Use Sleep Medication While Training To Become A Better Sleeper*.

When you sleep poorly you are tired the next day and you have to push yourself to get through the day. This causes a stress on the body and the release of adrenalin. At the end of the day you may have an “adrenalin hangover” which can make it hard to fall asleep. Sleeping pills counteract the adrenalin and enable you to sleep. If you stop your sleeping pills before you have trained yourself to get enough sleep to feel rested, the adrenalin from pushing yourself through the day will aggravate your insomnia again. Therefore, it is important that you stay on your sleep medication until you have trained yourself to get enough sleep to feel rested.

Once you have trained yourself to become a good sleeper, your next step is to gradually increase your sleep time until you are getting enough sleep to feel fully rested. Once you feel fully rested you no longer having to push yourself to get through the day, so you are no longer living on adrenalin. Then, getting off your sleep medication is usually fairly easy. At that point you can follow the article called *Getting Off Your Sleep Medication* to wean off your sleep aids in a way that helps to prevent your insomnia from coming back.

If you attempt to stop your sleep medication before you have become conditioned to be a good sleeper and before you are getting enough sleep to feel fully rested, then it is quite likely your sleep will deteriorate again. Weaning off your sleeping medication is the final step in the program.

The Process of Conditioning

Although there are a number of types of insomnia, once it has become a chronic problem there is usually a component of “conditioning” contributing to your difficulty sleeping. This is discussed in more detail in the section on *Psychophysiological Insomnia*. The section on *The Principles And Process For Reconditioning Good Sleep* explains in detail some of the important underlying principles of the *Online Insomnia Management Program*.

It is useful to understand these principles because many of the recommendations made in this program are “counter-intuitive”. In other words, they seem to be the opposite of what you would naturally want to do when you are having trouble sleeping. However, once you understand the principles of conditioning, then the program makes a lot of sense.

Historically, one of the most famous examples of conditioning was conducted by the Russian scientist, Ivan Pavlov in the late 1800’s. He was initially conducting research on the digestion of dogs and noticed that they would naturally salivate when he brought them food. He would also ring a dinner bell when he brought them food. Eventually the dogs learned to salivate at the sound of the bell even when there was no food. This came to be known as a “conditioned response”.

Now, Pavlov did not sit down with his dogs and say, “Look. I am going to ring a bell and I want you to salivate.” The dogs had no control over their salivation or awareness of the conditioning process.

What we are going to do in this program is essentially “stack the deck” physiologically speaking in favor of not being able to stay awake at night in bed, long enough to experience success at sleeping better. Then after a few weeks of sleeping better you will start to feel more confident in your ability to sleep. After a few weeks of confidence in your ability to sleep, you will start to feel like a good sleeper again. Once you are a

good sleeper then you will be able to gradually increase your sleep time until you are getting sleep to feel rested. Once you are feeling rested then we can wean you off your sleeping pills if you have been using pills to help you sleep.

The main reason for explaining to you the principles behind the sleep program is that you are more likely to follow the program if you understand it. However, it does not really matter if you understand it. The most important thing is that you do it! The conditioning process works as long as you experience success at sleeping better by following the recommendations.

For this week and subsequent weeks of the Program, please make sure that you follow the recommendations outlined in the articles entitled *The Principles And Process For Reconditioning Good Sleep* and *Sleep Hygiene*. If you are taking medication, then also read the articles entitled *How To Use Sleep Medication While Conditioning Good Sleep* and *Getting Off Your Sleep Medication*.