

**WARWICK**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK



**SLEEP BETTER,  
FEEL BETTER**

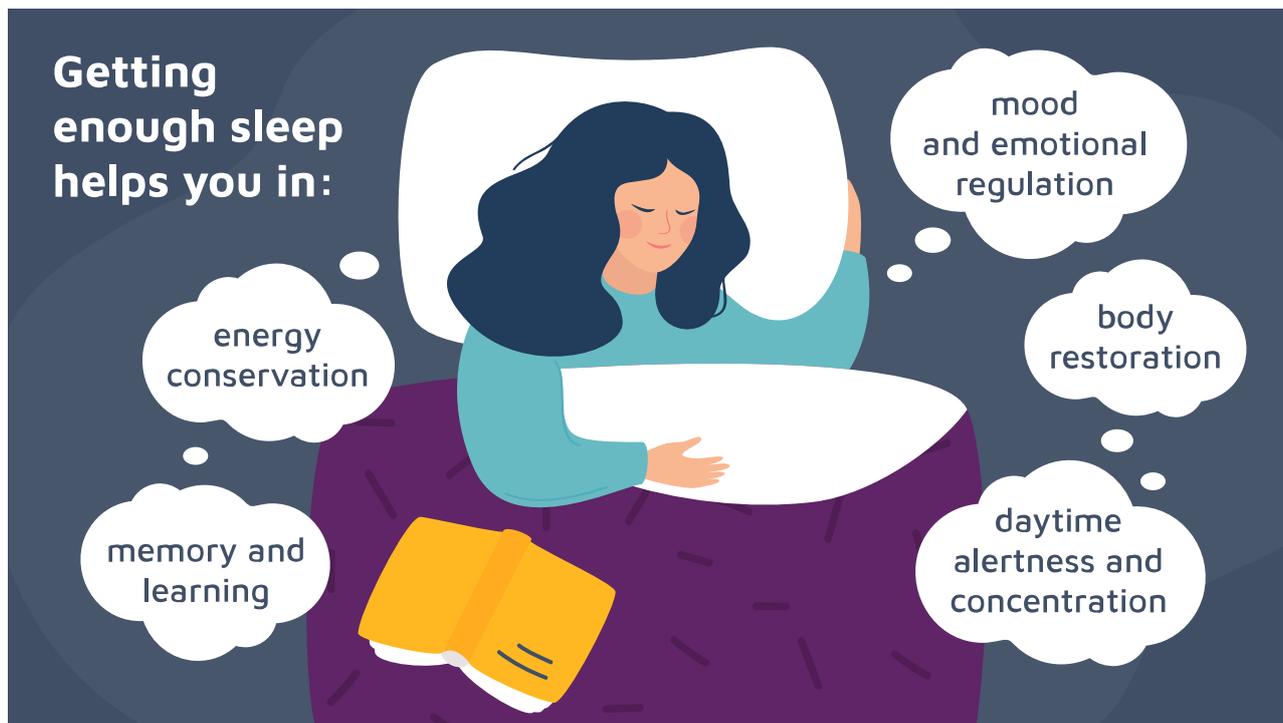
**TIPS & TRICKS**

# OVERVIEW

This guide will give you some useful tips and tricks on how to manage both your sleep and wellbeing using psychoeducation and skills training. These techniques are structured around elements of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for insomnia and emotion regulation. As the name suggests, it is part cognitive, referring to what we think and part behavioural, referring to what we do. CBT is based on the idea that thoughts, behaviours, and feelings both emotional and physical are all interconnected.

# SLEEP AND INSOMNIA<sup>02</sup>

Sleep is an active biological process. It affects the body's metabolism and immune system, and allows the body to repair, restore and heal itself.



All of these functions are working together for one overall aim: **optimal functioning of the body and mind**. Therefore, to keep yourself functioning optimally both physical and mentally, it is important to prioritise and protect your sleep!

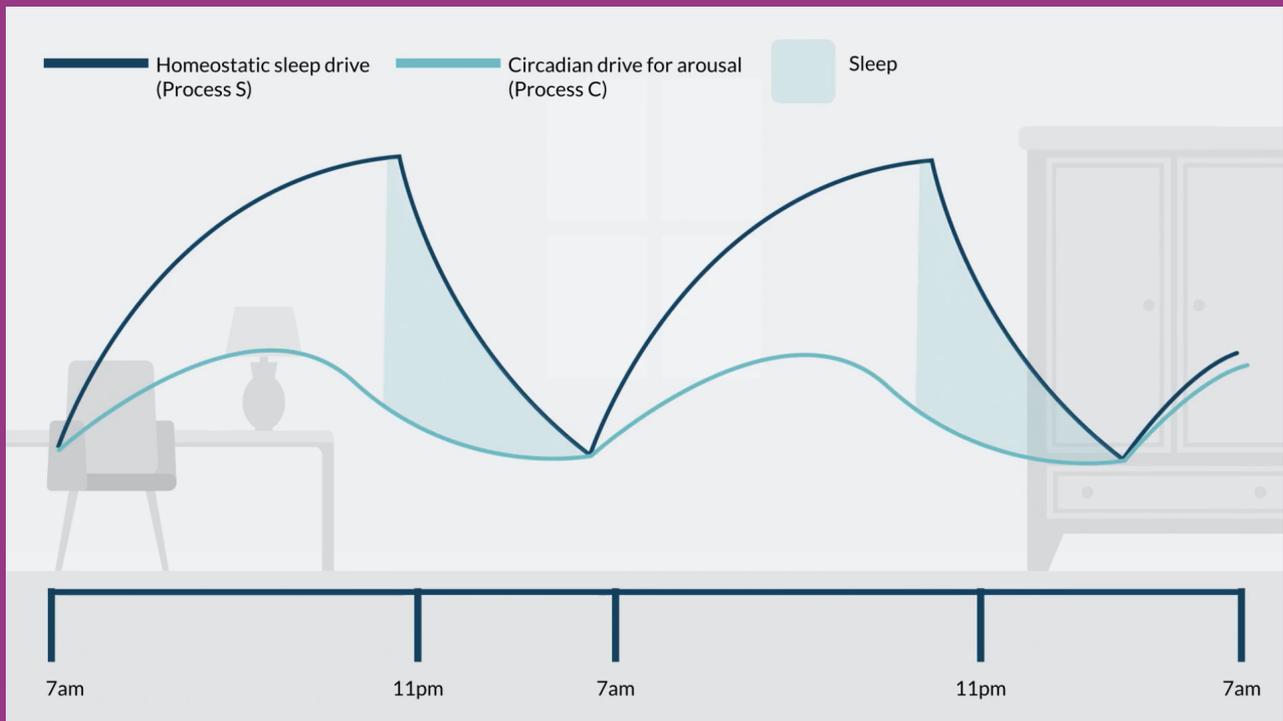
Insomnia is defined as:

- having trouble falling asleep,
- staying asleep,
- waking up many times at night,
- waking up earlier than planned.

Insomnia is a common problem that can be brief (e.g. can't sleep because of an important job interview) or long-lasting. Persistent insomnia can result in poor-quality sleep and a lack of feeling refreshed, which over time could significantly impact your overall mood and daily functioning.

# HOMEOSTATIC SLEEP<sup>03</sup> DRIVE & CIRCADIAN RHYTHM

The first important force that regulates our sleep is the **homeostatic process**, or the sleep drive, also referred to as Process S. This process balances our need to sleep with our need to be awake. The longer we stay awake, the more sleep pressure grows. Conversely, sleep pressure reduces as we sleep



Another component of sleep is our **circadian rhythm**, or Process C, which counteracts our sleep drive during the day. Circadian rhythms help keep us alert during the day and allow us to sleep at night when our sleep drive is normally greatest. Several factors such as keeping a regular sleep schedule, avoiding naps and exposure to daylight play a key role in strengthening our circadian rhythm.

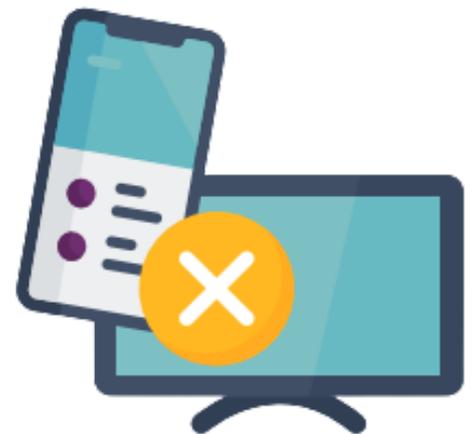
You've probably heard of dental hygiene, which includes habits like brushing and flossing that maintain the health of your teeth and gums. Similarly, we use the term "good sleep hygiene," for practices that help maintain the quality and quantity of your sleep. Maintaining good sleep hygiene can help eliminate factors that disrupt sleep and promote factors that benefit sleep.

## 01. **Make your room sleep-ready**

Use blackout curtains or an eye mask, as darkness triggers the secretion of sleep hormone melatonin. You can also try to wear earplugs. Having a cool room may also help to support both sleep onset and sleep quality.

## 02. **Limit screen time before bed**

Make your bedroom a place just for sleeping or sex. Avoid doing other activities in your bed or bedroom, such as watching TV or using your phone. If you do use electronic devices in the evening, dim the light or turn on blue light filters where possible.



## 03. **Avoid eating large meals 3 hours before bedtime**

This allows time for digestion to occur before you sleep and prevent you from waking in the night or going into a lighter sleep. If hungry before bed, choose a light snack instead.

## 04. **Avoid clock watching**

Guestimating how much time we have left until our alarm goes off makes us more aware of the passing of time and of the fact we're not sleeping. Not falling asleep in turn can make us anxious and may trigger thoughts and worries about the consequences of not sleeping.



## 05. **Avoid lying in at the weekend and maintain the same sleeping and waking schedule**

Despite our intentions on trying to 'catch-up on sleep', this disrupts our circadian rhythm, and our sleep/wake cycle continues to be inconsistent. We are shifting our circadian rhythm later, making it more difficult for us to fall asleep that next night.

## 06. **Don't exercise within 3 hours of bedtime**

This will activate hormones designed to make us feel alert. Exercise can also interfere with falling asleep because of the way that it affects body temperature, so it's best to give your body time to cool down before trying to sleep.

## 07. **Avoid stimulating substances near bedtime**

While alcohol can help people fall asleep, as the body processes the alcohol, sleep becomes more fragmented and less restful. Drinking too much caffeine during the day also stops us from powering down at night.

# STIMULUS CONTROL THERAPY

There are four principles of Stimulus Control Therapy (SCT), which aim to retrain your brain to associate sleep with your bedroom and dissociate it with other unhelpful habits

## **GO TO BED ONLY WHEN SLEEPY**

**01.**

Going to bed before you are sleepy is likely to result in a long period of wakefulness in bed. You should go to bed only when sleepy, not because you may feel fatigued or exhausted or because of a certain time on the clock.

## **KEEP A REGULAR SLEEP WAKE SCHEDULE**

**03.**

Keep a regular sleep-wake schedule. Wake up and get out of bed at the same time every morning, this includes weekends. By sleeping in, you are shifting your circadian rhythm later. The circadian rhythm helps to keep you alert during the day and allows you to sleep at night. Therefore, when you have irregular sleeping or waking up times, you are retraining your body to shift towards a later wake up time that is not consistent with your desired sleep routine and this will only disrupt your sleep even further.

## **ONCE IN BED, IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO SLEEP WITHIN**

**02.**

### **ABOUT 20 MINUTES, GET UP**

Staying in bed awake will only weaken the association between the bed and sleepiness. Once in bed, if unable to sleep within about 20 minutes, get up. Go to another room and do something relaxing, trying to avoid putting on any bright lights. Only when you feel sleepy again, go back to bed and give yourself another chance to fall asleep.

## **NO NAPPING DURING THE DAY**

**04.**

If you often feel the need to nap in the early afternoon, this is a normal part of the circadian rhythm called the "post-lunch dip". When we nap, we take away from our sleep drive, which can make it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep that same night. Therefore, it is important to avoid naps when possible.

# STRESS

Stress plays a major role in the initiation of sleep problems. The majority of people with insomnia can recall stressful events associated with the onset of their sleep problems. However, even after the initial stressful events have passed, the sleep problems may persist. While you may not currently be experiencing a major stressor in your life, stress associated with your daily hassles or the stress associated with having long standing sleep problems can still play a major role in maintaining insomnia.

To take positive steps to reduce our own stress, it's important we first take the time to identify what causes us to feel stressed.



Work-related stress is common and can lead to severe physical and psychological problems. One example is burnout. Burnout results from chronic workplace stress that is ongoing and has not been successfully managed and can include multiple physical and psychological symptoms such as emotional exhaustion.

There is no one single cause of stress and no one way stress can be displayed but there are signs to watch out for:

## PHYSICAL

Aches and pains, particularly muscle tension, heartburn or indigestion, diarrhoea and constipation, feelings of nausea or dizziness, tiredness or headaches, loss of sex drive.

## EMOTIONAL

Feelings of constant worry or anxiety, feelings of being overwhelmed, difficulty concentrating, mood swings or changes in mood, irritability or having a short temper, difficulty relaxing, low self-esteem, forgetfulness and disorganisation.

## BEHAVIOURAL

Eating more or less than usual, changes in sleeping habits, using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs to relax, being tearful, biting your nails, poor self-care, becoming impatient with co-workers.

# RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

To prevent stress and negative feelings from sticking around, we can apply skills of consciously relaxing muscles and purposefully calming breathing.

Before starting any relaxation exercises:



- 1** Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Turn off your phone and emails.
- 2** Get in a comfortable position in a chair. Arrange your head, neck, and shoulders so that they are upright but not stiff. Leave your arms and legs uncrossed and your feet flat on the floor. Your arms can rest in your lap or on your legs.
- 3** Allow your eyes to either close gently or direct them at a point in front of you, and follow the instructions on the audio tracks.

## REMEMBER..

- Relaxation is a skill. It may feel unnatural or awkward at first but with practice it should become easier and more relaxing.
- Keep in mind that a passive attitude is key for maximal relaxation. You just can't force yourself to relax. Trying really hard will only work against you.
- A small percentage of people become more anxious as they become more aware of everything going on in their body. If you find yourself becoming more anxious or feeling out of control remember that this is also normal.
- Distraction is normal. If you find your mind drifting-off, just redirect your thoughts to the task at hand.

# FIVE SENSES

This exercise is a brief activity that you can do anywhere and anytime if you're feeling distressed and in need of being detached from the stressful situation to relax, clear your mind and have a refreshed mind to manage the situation.

Use this exercise to quickly ground yourself in the present when you only have a moment. The goal is to notice something that you are currently experiencing through each of your senses. The numbers for each sense are only a guideline. Feel free to do more or less of each. Also, try this exercise while doing an activity like washing dishes, listening to music, or going for a walk.



## x2 things you can smell

Maybe you can smell flowers, coffee, or freshly cut grass. It doesn't have to be a nice smell either: maybe there's an overflowing trash can or sewer.

## x3 things you can hear

Notice all the background sounds you had been filtering out, such as an air-conditioning, birds chirping, or cars on a distant street.

## x4 things you can feel

Maybe you can feel the pressure of your feet on the floor, your shirt resting on your shoulders, or the temperature on your skin. Pick up an object and notice its texture.

## x1 thing you can taste

Pop a piece of gum in your mouth, sip a drink, eat a snack if you have one, or simply notice how your mouth tastes. "Taste" the air to see how it feels on your tongue.

## x5 things you can see

Look around you and notice 5 things you hadn't noticed before. Maybe a pattern on a wall, light reflecting from a surface, or a knick-knack in the corner of a room.

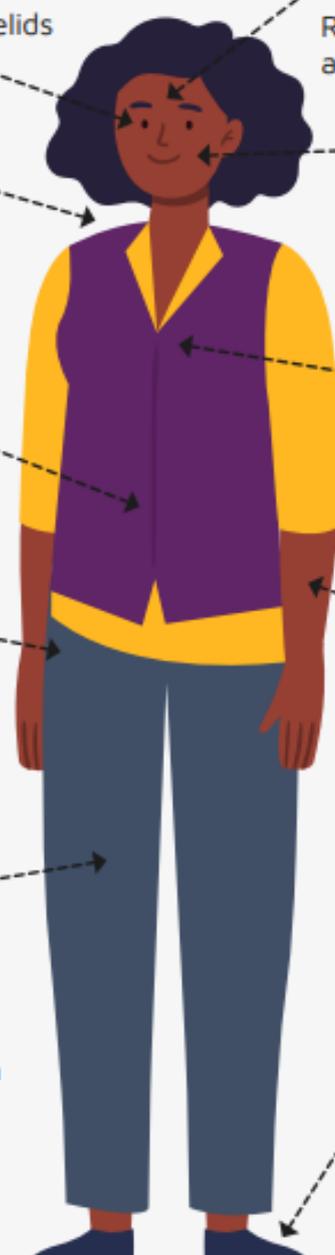
# PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise to calm the body and the mind. The goal is to pay attention to the sensations you feel within each body part.

The steps for progressive muscle relaxation are:

1. Assess every muscle group of the body for tightness starting with the large muscle groups
2. Relax each muscle group. This can be done by first tightening the muscle group very tight and then letting go of 100% of the tension.
3. Continue muscle group relaxation until full relaxation is achieved. This is progressive muscle relaxation.

**Instructions for each muscle**



- 1. Forehead**  
Raise your eyebrows as far as you can.
- 2. Eyes**  
Clench your eyelids tightly shut.
- 3. Mouth**  
Open your mouth wide enough to stretch the hinges of your jaw.
- 4. Neck/Shoulders**  
Raise your shoulders up to touch your ears.
- 5. Chest**  
Tighten by taking a deep breath.
- 6. Stomach**  
Suck your stomach in.
- 7. Entire arm and hand**  
Tighten your biceps by drawing your forearm up towards your shoulder and "make a muscle" while clenching your fist. Repeat with the other arm and hand.
- 8. Buttocks**  
Tighten by pulling your buttocks together.
- 9. Entire leg**  
Squeeze thigh muscles while pulling your toes upward towards you. Repeat with the other leg.
- 10. Feet**  
Curl your toes downward.

**Remember:**

**Step 1: Hold each muscle tension for 5 seconds**

**Step 2: Pause for 15 seconds and breathe in deeply between each muscle tension**

# WORRY TREE

Research shows that people with depressive or anxious symptoms do not have more problems than people without these symptoms, but just spend more time worrying about their problems. Worries are thoughts set in motion by “what if...?” questions. It is these “what if...” questions that cause the most anxiety and large amounts of time get spent worrying about things that probably won’t even happen.

Whether excessive or realistic, worrying almost never leads to anything productive. At the same time, completely eliminating worry may not be realistic or even desirable either. However, the skills needed to manage worry and decrease its impact on our emotions and mood can be learned.



The “worry tree” technique involves having a scheduled worry time every day for a period of 10-15 minutes scheduled well before bedtime, during which we deal with the problems and concerns we have.

The goal of the worry time is to limit worry to a specific period of the day, to have consistent time each day to think about things that are concerning and to develop productive ways of thinking about and dealing with them.

# MIND TRICKS

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Mind tricks are overly negative ways of seeing ourselves, others, and the world we are in. They are often intrusive, unrealistic and cause unpleasant emotions.

The aim of identifying mind tricks is to break the vicious cycles we can get trapped into, balance these negative automatic thoughts and reconnect with positive behaviours.

## ALL OR NOTHING THINKING

Also known as “black or white” thinking and thinking in terms of extremes. Seeing things as either right or wrong, good or bad, perfect or terrible. With such an extreme way of viewing things, it means we can start seeing one small mistake as a total failure. Judging yourself against unrealistic standards and expectations. Things aren’t always either black or white. In reality, life has many grey areas.

## OVERGENERALISATION

Basing your perception of a situation on a single evidence or event. Overgeneralising that one negative situation is part of a constant cycle of bad things. People who overgeneralise often use words like always or never when describing things.

## JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Presuming we know what other people are thinking without looking at the evidence. Predicting the future and having negative expectations about what might happen. Don’t jump to conclusions. You can’t read someone else’s mind. Remind yourself that what you’re thinking is really one hypothesis, and your feelings are likely contributing to it.

## SHOULD OR MUST STATEMENTS

Applying strict rules to yourself on how you should, must, or ought to feel or behave all day everyday. Setting yourself up to unrealistic expectations, and naturally when not met, leading to feelings of disappointment and stress.

## CATASTROPHISING

Expecting the worst will happen. Exaggerating how badly something will unfold and minimising your capacity to manage difficult situations. More often than not, catastrophic thoughts are way out of proportion with the situation. When you are magnifying the likelihood of something bad happening - consider just how likely it really is. Would it really be as awful as you're imagining? Is there another outcome that's more likely?

## EMOTIONAL REASONING

Making assumptions and basing your views on an experience based on feelings in the heat of the moment rather than facts. Recognise that how you feel about a situation is just a reaction to your way of thinking. If you make an assumption based on your feelings - challenge this viewpoint by looking for real evidence.

## LABELLING

Describing yourself using negative labels based on a single negative experience or self-reflection. This is done instead of factually and reasonably describing the situation. The negative labels we place on ourselves usually aren't accurate because it discounts positive evidence which contradicts that label. Swap unhelpful and negative labels for positive reinforcement.



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