

Enhanced Sleep Protocol

Getting good sleep is arguably the most important factor in recovering from any illness especially mental illness. Our bodies rejuvenate and rebuild during sleep. Often problems with sleep are the first signs of an impending mental illness.

Some of the powerful benefits of getting consistently good sleep that neuroscience has discovered include:

- enhanced memory
- enhanced creativity
- enhanced energy
- lose excess fat
- slows the aging process and keeps skin looking younger longer
- more resilient towards stress
- more calm and better able to find solutions to challenges you face in the day
- improved decision making capacity
- less impulsive and more thoughtful
- boosts brain power and happy mood states
- better social skills

Our bodies love consistency and rhythm. Most of your hormones and internal bodily activities function around an internal clock. About 10% of all of our genes are regulated by this clock. The best way to recover from any illness is to help your body get back into sync and the best way to get back into sync is to go to bed at the same time and get out of bed at the same time. Sunlight is the most important environmental factor to influence our internal clocks. When you eat your first meal and when you exercise are also important factors that can help get your body back into rhythm.

In order to get back into sync, establishing a nighttime ritual is necessary. Below are a list of suggestions to help you get back into rhythm and expedite your road to recovery.

-Set your bedtime and awake time and stick to it as best as you can. Going to bed at different hours creates a state of perpetual jet-lag making you feel out of sync.

-1-2 hours before your set bedtime begin a night time ritual. This could be taking a relaxing shower, having a cup of relaxing tea, listening to relaxing music, meditating, anything that begins to indicate a slowing down of the mind and body. This includes shutting off the TV and the computer. If you must use technology use blue light blocking software and or blue light blocking glasses. My personal favorites are the glasses made by TrueDark and I recommend wearing the yellow glasses 2 hours before sleep and the red glasses 30min to 1 hour (or longer) before sleep. ([Twilights](#) | [TrueDark](#))

-Make sure not to expose yourself to bright lights during the night - this usually means purchasing a nightlight for your bathroom if your bathroom light is too bright (most are) or at least use blue-light blocking glasses.

(https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0779R6D68/ref=sspa_dk_detail_0?psc=1&pd_rd_i=B0779R6D68&pd_r%20d_wg=xEOBT&pd_rd_r=Y653X43CCK10P4PP2G83&pd_rd_w=xr6Sg)

The blue-light that is emitted from lights and especially LED screens from TVs and Tech devices stimulates your retina's cells and sends a signal to your biological clock to break down your body's natural melatonin production (among other things) and begins to wake you up confusing your nervous system. Even if you can fall asleep this untimely blue-light stimulation can reduce the amount of deep restorative sleep you get each night.

Fact: Only 1 min of regular bathroom light exposure within 1 hour before bedtime reduces your melatonin by up to 30%

-Only use your bed for sleep and sex. Meditation and reading calming books or articles before bed is acceptable as well. That way the bed becomes a signal to the body for sleep and relaxation.

-Avoid caffeinated beverages after 2pm and for those who have serious difficulty sleeping avoiding caffeine all together is advised

-Make sure your bedroom is set up for optimal sleep conditions. If you are sensitive to sound wearing earplugs (I like Mack's Silicone Ear Plugs) or using a machine to create a monotone sound (sometimes called "white noise") can be used. Fans, white noise machines, air filters are a few machines that can be used.

-Make sure your room is dark and if for some reason you can't get your room to be dark then buying a good sleep mask can be very helpful. ([MZOO Sleep Eye Mask for Men Women, 3D Contoured Cup Sleeping Mask & Blindfold, Concave Molded Night Sleep Mask, Block Out Light, Soft Comfort Eye Shade Cover for Travel Yoga Nap, Black](#)) The best is a good set of blackout curtains. Also I recommend using special stickers to block LED lights in your bedroom. All wifi in your bedroom should be turned off before you go to bed (suggest putting your phone on airplane mode).

Mental Thumb Drive

-If your mind becomes active at night try listening to a guided meditation and or give yourself 5 minutes and write in a journal next to your bed all the thoughts that keep intruding in on you and say to yourself after you have written them down that you will deal with these thoughts during the day after a good night's rest. Make good on your personal promise and over time your mind will believe in you and begin to settle.

Gratitude PM

Over 3 well done scientific studies showed significant improvements in both mood and and sleep quality in a simple and easy practice that takes about 3-5 minutes a day. In your journal the last thing you write in it before you go to bed is list of 3 things you appreciate or feel gratitude towards that happened in the past 24 hours. Make a list and briefly review them using your senses as you review them.

-If you find yourself tossing and turning excessively for a long time then get up and do something that is boring or relaxing. Some gentle stretches, reading a boring book, or if you're spiritually inclined reading something spiritual can be helpful. Many of my clients and myself included will use this time to meditate with or without guidance. Many of the benefits of sleep can be derived through meditating and relaxing even if you don't fall asleep.

-If you tend to wake up in the middle of the night often I recommend guided meditations or hypnosis which many good ones can be downloaded or streamed from youtube.com. Create a list of your favorites and if you wake up simply put on your headphones and listen peacefully.

-Don't try to sleep. If you are resting/meditating peacefully, even if you feel like you're not sleeping, has been scientifically demonstrated to be very beneficial to the body.

-If you have a night where you don't sleep as much as you would like be mindful to not believe any expectations on how you are going to feel for the rest of the day. You might surprise yourself that when you allow yourself to be open you may have a much better day than you expected - even with little to no sleep. Believing in negative expectations sets up a self-fulfilling prophecy that keeps us locked into negative patterns. Instead simply be open to the possibility that your day can be just fine.

-When you wake up at your set time within the first 2 hours upon arising go outside for a 10-20 minute walk without sunglasses and as much skin exposure that is comfortable. Let the natural daylight help synchronize and reset your biological clock. During the walk think about what you plan on doing that day what challenges you might face and what would be the best response to them. Imagine overcoming the challenges and learning from them. This primes your brain to get ready for the day. Only do this for about 5 minutes and then go back into your senses, feel the sun on your skin and sense your body waking up with the sun supporting you. Scientific studies that regular morning sun improves brain growth, brain function, improves mood, boosts testosterone, and charges your body's energy machines called mitochondria so that they can power you through your day. It takes about 1 week to start feeling the difference.

Sleep Journal

-For severe insomnia I highly recommend you keep a sleep diary. In the morning write down what time you went to bed, estimate what time you might have fallen asleep and what time you finally woke up. Write down any reoccurring intrusive thoughts that tend to keep you up. **Also for severe insomnia take out any clocks (avoids clock watching) and electronics in your room.** Your room should be like a cave: dark, cool, and quiet. Remember you can't try to sleep just like you can try to digest your food or grow your hair. All you can do is create an optimal environment conducive to sleep. Remember learning to relax when not sleeping can give many of the benefits of sleep.

Remember reconditioning your sleep habits may take some time. Be easy on yourself and eventually your natural sleep cycle will begin to emerge and you will be resting peacefully soon.