

## I JUST CAN'T SLEEP!

### STUDENT COUNSELLING



### WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If you would like to make an appointment to see a counsellor to learn more about this topic, please contact the counselling service on your campus.

Distance students can contact any one of the campuses. Please tell the receptionist if you need an urgent appointment.

### CONTACT DETAILS

#### ALBANY

Health and Counselling

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (09) 443 9783

Email: Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz

#### MANAWATŪ

Student Counselling Service

Turitea Campus, Palmerston North

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (06) 350 5533

Email: s.counselling@massey.ac.nz

#### WELLINGTON

Student Counselling Service

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (04) 801 2542

<http://crow.massey.ac.nz>

<http://health-counselling.massey.nz>

## WHY FOCUS ON SLEEP?

- Sleep is not merely a passive switching off; it is an active process involving functions such as energy conservation, and the restoration of brain tissue, while also allowing for the passing of the dark hours without you becoming bored.
- It is also the time when the brain sorts and makes sense of what has happened during the day. As a result it is essential for effective learning and memory.
- Over 50% percent of adults will complain of past or current sleep difficulties.
- Common problems include having too much sleep, having difficulty falling asleep, and waking up in the night.

## WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO SLEEP DIFFICULTIES?

- Environmental factors such as noise, too much light in your bedroom, or a room temperature that is too hot or too cold can affect the quality of your sleep.
- Comfort issues such as the quality of the mattress you sleep on, or the type of pillow you use may also interfere with your sleep.
- Daytime inactivity or daytime naps can lead to feelings of fatigue and will often also result in insomnia at night.
- You may not be able to relax or sleep restfully due to feeling unsafe. It may be helpful to secure your home with extra locks, or keep a phone by the bed.
- Falling out of synch with your daily cycles of wakefulness and sleepiness can help create sleep problems. For example, your sleep can be affected by the external cues in your environment, such as the time you shower, eat meals, or go out with friends.
- Some individuals engage in negative or obsessive thinking when they go to bed. If you are a person who spends long periods of time worrying, it may be useful to set aside a 30 minute "worry time" each day. During this time, write down all the problems concerning you, and brainstorm possible solutions towards solving these problems.
- Long term sleep problems may be a symptom of a health problem such as depression or a physical illness. If your sleep difficulties have persisted for several months, it would be useful for you to check this out

## HOW CAN SLEEP HABITS IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP?

Research has shown that if you are experiencing sleep problems, there are things that you can do to help regain control of your sleep, and break the cycle of poor sleep patterns.

Richard Bootzin developed a technique to help people with insomnia known as stimulus control, which involves a number of sleep habit instructions.

The main goals of the stimulus control technique are to fall asleep quickly and to maintain sleep.

### THESE GOALS ARE ACHIEVED BY:

- Strengthening the association of the bed and the bedroom as a cue for sleep
- Weakening the association of the bed/bedroom as a cue for activities that might interfere with sleep.
- Developing a consistent sleep rhythm.

If you are experiencing problems with sleep, and you are committed to following these instructions, it is likely that you will experience some sleep improvement. However, it will take time for sleep changes to happen, so be patient and persevere.



## STIMULUS CONTROL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Lie down intending to go to sleep only when you are sleepy.
2. Do not use your bed for anything except sleep; that is, do not read, watch television, eat or worry in bed. Sexual activity is the only exception to this rule. On such occasions, the instructions are to be followed afterward when you intend to go to sleep.
3. If you find yourself unable to fall asleep, get up and go to another room. Stay up as long as you wish and then return to the bedroom to sleep. Although you do not have to watch the clock, get out of bed if you do not fall asleep immediately. Remember that the goal is to associate your bed with falling asleep quickly! If you are in bed more than about 10-15 minutes without falling asleep and have not got up, you are not following this instruction.
4. If you still cannot fall asleep, repeat the above rule. Do this as often as is necessary throughout the night.
5. Set your alarm and get up at the same time every morning, irrespective of how much sleep you got during the night. This will help your body to acquire a consistent sleep rhythm.
6. Do not nap during the day.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS

1. Wind down an hour before bed.
  - Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake late in the day.
  - Reduce physical and mental stimulation late in the day (except for sexual activity).
2. Exercise late in the afternoon or early evening.
3. Do not have a visible bedroom clock.
4. Have a light carbohydrate or dairy snack before bedtime.
5. Avoid chocolate or large amounts of sugar.
6. Avoid drinking large amounts of fluid late in the day.
7. Have a hot bath or shower early on in the evening.