A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP
A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

I: UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Produced by Ballarat Health Services,
Psychiatric Services

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Problems with Sleep

Difficulties with sleeping are extremely common and affect almost all of us at some times. Ongoing problems with sleep affect about 35% of the population at any time. A good or normal nights sleep is generally described as going to sleep within 10 or 15 minutes and staying asleep for 6-8 hours. However the eight hours myth does not account for the fact that we all have our own sleep requirements that vary dramatically between people. So simply not getting eight hours sleep is not a sleeping problem and we should not worry if we can get by happily with only four hours sleep each night. In fact worrying about the amount of sleep we are getting is probably going to do more harm than good.

Need To Have A Regular Sleep Pattern

What is really important is that we are able to establish a regular sleep pattern that suits our life style. For example if we go to bed between 11 and 12 p.m. and wake up after 7am feeling well rested and able to face the day, we have a good regular sleep pattern. Someone else may go to bed at 1am and get up at 5am feeling healthy and rested. Whatever pattern we establish what is important is that it enables us to lead the kind of life we would like. Problems occur if our sleep is disturbed for a long time and we feel tired and unwell because of it.

Why Don’t We Get Enough Sleep?

There are lots of reasons why we may not seem to get enough sleep. We might keep waking up too early or have difficulty going to sleep. We may even sleep too much or keep waking in the night worrying. We may have nightmares that make us afraid to sleep or make us restless.

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE MAIN PROBLEM WE ARE HAVING WITH SLEEPING?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

The reason why it is important to try and sort out any problems we may be having with sleeping is because it often affects the whole household, especially if we are sharing a room with someone else, or make noise preventing others from sleeping. Sleep is also one of the most helpful ways of recovering from many physical illnesses.
CAUSES OF SLEEP PROBLEMS

• stress and unresolved problems
• unpleasant thoughts and worries
  • most mental disorders
• caffeine or other stimulants
• some medicines for medical problems
  • alcohol and drug use
  • snoring
• sedatives -- including sleeping medicines
  • pain - cramps
• thoughts about not sleeping
• bedroom hot/cold, noisy, uncomfortable
  • nightmares
  • lack of exercise
• sleeping during the day
• shift work or jet lag

Problem Analysis
In order to get a better idea about what might be causing our sleeping problems, our Instructor will ask X________ some questions about it using the Problem Analysis worksheet. This will take us 10-15 minutes. We can stay and listen, but some of us may have other things that we would rather be doing for this time.

Feedback too all members

We have had a good discussion about the problems X________ has been having with sleeping. Some of the points that we thought were particularly helpful in thinking of ways to solve this problem were:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Are there any other points that anyone would like to add to this?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Keeping a Sleep Chart

One of the first things we need to do is find out a bit more about exactly what our sleep pattern is at the moment. Let’s look at the Sleep Chart. This record will show us an estimate of how much sleep we have had, at what times, and where we slept. For instance we may have dozed off at 4 p.m. in front of the TV in a chair. We will need to record as accurately as we
can how much time we have spent sleeping each 24 hours. It is a good idea to record this as we go rather than trying to remember later. There may be times when we are unsure how much time we spent sleeping, but just guess as close as we can; our family and friends may be able to help us.

DO WE HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT MAKING A RECORD OF OUR SLEEPING PATTERNS?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Practice filling in the Daily Sleep Chart

We can start by filling in how much sleep we have had today, starting with last night. This should help us to get an idea of how the sheet works and to sort out any misunderstandings.

We will review the Sleep Chart at the start of our next session to see if we can get some ideas on how to improve our sleep pattern.
GETTING A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP

II: SPECIAL STRATEGIES

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STRATEGIES FOR GETTING A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP

Review of Sleep Chart
Let’s review the record that we have been making on our sleep charts. Now that we have this record we may be able to see more clearly what our sleep pattern is and find ways to solve the problems we have been having with sleeping.

Healthy Sleep Habits
To give us the best chance of a good night’s sleep we need to ensure that:

• we sleep in a comfortable place. Sleeping in a clean, comfortable bed in a warm, well-ventilated and quiet room.

• we restrict sleeping to our bed at night, rather than dozing in a chair or sofa during the day.

• we may need to stop sharing a bed or a room until our sleeping problems improve

• we get treatment for any joint or stomach pains, or need to urinate that are preventing us from going to sleep and may wake us up.

• we remove all things from our bedroom that do not remind us of sleeping, for instance a telephone, TV, work, books, radio, food or drink.

• we allow ourselves time to wind down after the day and not go to bed until we feel sleepy. A hot milky drink may help us to relax, or perhaps a warm bath or shower. Reading may help or listening to calming music. But do this in the sitting room, not in bed.

• avoid drinking alcohol, coffee or smoking before going to bed, and if possible any time after 4 p.m. Limited use of stimulant drinks, such as tea or coffee, throughout the day is fine (maximum 5 average cups of medium strength coffee). But we may be especially sensitive to caffeine, so we might try eliminating tea, coffee and cola drinks entirely for a trial period and see if it makes any difference to our sleep.

• regular daily exercise helps us use up our energy and makes us sleepy. But it is not advisable to do vigorous exercise within 2 hours of going to bed.

• avoid lying in bed worrying. If we have something that is worrying us, try to do some problem solving before we go to bed. If we haven’t solved it, get out of bed and fill out a Problem Solving Worksheet.

• if we find we are unable to sleep plan some constructive activities that we can do without disturbing anyone else. Do not do these activities in bed, get up and go into another room, so that we only associate our bedroom with sleeping and restfulness.

• get up at the same time each morning no matter how much sleep we have had during the night.
WHICH OF THESE COULD WE TRY TO HELP US SLEEP BETTER?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________  

Special Strategies for Sleep

Do Nothing
Sleep problems are often only temporary and we usually get back to our normal pattern within a few weeks. However if the problem has been ongoing for more than a month it is a good idea to try out some of these strategies.

Relaxation
One of the best ways to ensure that we will go to sleep is to relax before going to bed. We can make this part of the time we set aside to 'wind down'. Self-hypnosis audiotapes can help us relax and sometimes are a useful aid to help us fall asleep. Meditation techniques that help us to clear our mind of worrying thoughts by repeating a soothing word to ourselves. (see WHAT IS ANXIETY? page 14: Muscle Relaxation for details on relaxation strategies)

Sex and Sleep
Many couples connect going to bed with having sex. For many people having sex is a great way to finish the day and relax and sleep well afterwards. But if we are having problems sleeping it may be a good idea to plan our sexual activities outside the bedroom, and at other times during the day and evening. Many couples have difficulty sleeping together because of their different sleep patterns. Seldom do we both feel like going to sleep at exactly the same time. So it may be best to agree to go to bed at different times, or even to sleep in separate beds or rooms if we have sleep difficulties. This may not seem romantic, but it may do wonders to improve our relationship in the long run!

Problem Solving
Solving problems before we go to bed prevents us from lying awake worrying about them. If this is not possible and they are not crisis matters, then arrange to discuss them at the next Resource Group meeting, and then try to forget about them till then. (see Solving Problems and Achieving Goals page 56-58 for further details)

Medical Check Up
There are many reasons for having a check up from our family doctor if we are having sleep problems. Among these are:

(i) Pain Relief
Any pains need to be discussed with our doctor. There are special clinics that can provide assistance with pain relief when the usual treatment is not helping.

(ii) Snoring
People who snore are prone to wake up, as well as cause others sleeping near them to wake as well. Most snoring can be corrected with devices to ensure that we sleep on our sides rather
than our backs. However, some people who snore have a serious disorder called sleep apnea. For periods they may stop breathing and sometimes this can lead to death. So it is important to have a check up from our doctor if we are a snorer.

(iii) Restless Legs
"Restless legs" is a problem that we know very little about. It often causes us to wake during the night. Some medicines as well as muscle relaxation can help.

(iv) Need to go to the Toilet during the Night
Having to get up more than once during the night can be a sign of several serious medical disorders. It is important to tell our doctor about these at the earliest possible time so that successful treatment can be started.

(v) Sleep Problems Caused by Other Medicines we Take
Some medicines we take for other medical problems may cause problems with our sleep. It is important to tell our doctor about all the medicines we are taking and check that if any may be contributing to our sleep problems.

(vi) Mental Disorders
Problems with sleep are one of the most common symptoms of most mental disorders. That is one reason why any person who has a sleep problem should have a check up from their family doctor to be sure that they are not developing depression or one of the less common types of disorders. If this is the case, then special medicines for depression or other mental disorders may help our sleep problem.

(vii) Medicines for Sleep
Sleeping pills generally only work for a short period of a week or two. If we take them longer there is a risk of becoming dependent on them and having difficulties stopping them. In the long run they make sleep problems worse. Other tranquillisers and sedatives such as alcohol may help us to get to sleep, but may then cause us to wake early and have difficulty falling asleep again.

Meals before Bed
It is not a good idea to eat a heavy meal just before going to bed, especially if we suffer from indigestion. But a milky drink and a light snack may be a good idea.

Problem Solving
Now we have discussed many strategies for developing healthy sleep habits we can complete a Problem Solving worksheet to develop a practical plan to try to find ways to cope with our sleep problem. We may find it useful to write the plan in detail on the Healthy Sleeping Habits worksheet. As usual, we can organise the discussion without the help of our Instructor. He or she will contribute only with special ideas that have been based on good research.

Real Life Practice and Recording Progress
We will continue to record our sleep on our Sleep Chart. At the beginning of our next meeting we will review this to see if the plan has been helpful.
Here is an example of a plan of a person who was having difficulty getting to sleep:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>no alcohol or coffee after evening meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 p.m.</td>
<td>watch TV to relax a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 p.m.</td>
<td>Winding Down time - Reading a book in the lounge - 30 mins, take a bath - 30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 p.m.</td>
<td>make hot chocolate drink while get into my pyjamas, lie down on sofa and do muscle relaxing for 10-15 minutes, if I feel sleepy I will get into bed and turn the light out; if I don’t feel tired after 10 minutes I will do some more relaxation; if I am still not going to sleep after another 10 minutes I will get up again, I will go into the lounge and read more of my book, I will wait until I feel really sleepy, before I go to bed again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 a.m.</td>
<td>I will get up at the usual time even if I haven’t slept well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HEALTHY SLEEPING HABITS

Problem/Goal

Sleeping Habit Plan
PROBLEM ANALYSIS

PROBLEM: What is the problem? How often does it happen? How long does it last? How distressing? (Use chart)

________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________

BRIEF BACKGROUND: ____________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________

ANTECEDENTS: What happens in the moments just before the problem occurs? Do you find yourself in certain
in places, situations, or with certain types of people? Do you have any special thoughts or feelings? What exactly are
you doing at that moment?
________________________________________________________________________________________________

CONSEQUENCES: What happens immediately after the problem starts? What thoughts and feelings do you have?
What things do you do? What do other people do? How do other people react?
________________________________________________________________________________________________

MODIFYING FACTORS:
a) What seems to make the problem better? What makes it less likely to occur? (List all without discussion)

1 ____________________________ 2 ____________________________ 3 ____________________________
4 ____________________________ 5 ____________________________ 6 ____________________________

b) What seems to make the problem worse? What makes it more likely to occur?

1 ____________________________ 2 ____________________________ 3 ____________________________
4 ____________________________ 5 ____________________________ 6 ____________________________

BENEFITS AND DIFFICULTIES WHEN THIS PROBLEM IS SOLVED:
a) What benefits will you get when this problem is solved?
________________________________________________________________________________________________

b) What possible disadvantages might there be for you when the problem is solved? e.g., loss of attention, pressure to
work or to become more active, and to be expected to immediately do all those things you used to do?
________________________________________________________________________________________________

CURRENT PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGIES:
List all efforts to solve the problem, both effective and ineffective, including self, friends, professional treatment, etc
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________

SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE: Who could help you to work on this problem? ________________________________
SOLVING PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVING GOALS

Step 1. What exactly is the problem or goal?
Talk about the problem or goal until we can write down exactly what it is. Ask questions to make the issue clearer.
Break a big problem or goal into smaller parts.

_____________________________________________________________________________________________

Step 2. List all possible solutions -- brain storming
Make a list of all ideas, even “bad” or “silly” suggestions. Get everyone to suggest something. Do NOT talk about
whether ideas are good or bad at this stage.

1. _______________________________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________________________________________

4. _______________________________________________________________________________________

5. _______________________________________________________________________________________

6. _______________________________________________________________________________________

Step 3. Briefly highlight the main advantages & disadvantages
Get our group to say quickly what we think are the main advantages and disadvantages of each suggestion. Do NOT
write anything. Do NOT compare the possible solutions at this point.

Step 4. Choose the most practical suggestion
Choose the solution that can be carried out most easily with the resources (time, skills, materials, money) that we
have at present.

Step 5. Plan exactly how to carry out the solution
Organise the resources we need. Consider how to cope with likely hitches. Practise all difficult steps -- rehearse or
role play.

_______________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________

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_______________________________________________________________________________________________

Date and time to review progress with plan____________________

Step 6. Review progress in carrying out plan
Praise all the efforts we have made. Review progress on each step. Change the plan. Try another solution. Continue
problem solving until our problem is resolved or our goal is achieved.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place: B = BED</th>
<th>Quality: R = RESTFUL, F = FITFUL, RESTLESS</th>
<th>C = CHAIR</th>
<th>D = DOZING</th>
<th>IN = INDUCED BY MEDICATION OR ALCOHOL</th>
<th>O = OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep Chart</td>
<td>name_____________________    date_____________</td>
<td>midday</td>
<td>afternoon</td>
<td>evening</td>
<td>midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>hours</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>quality</td>
<td>hours</td>
<td>place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>hours</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
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<td>quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>hours</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>quality</td>
<td>hours</td>
<td>place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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|       | name | date | 12pm | 1pm | 2pm | 3pm | 4pm | 5pm | 6pm | 7pm | 8pm | 9pm | 10pm | 11pm | 12am | 1am | 2am | 3am | 4am | 5am | 6am | 7am | 8am | 9am | 10am | 11am |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Monday|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Tuesday|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Wednesday| |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Thursday|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Friday  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
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| Saturday|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
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| Sunday  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
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