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Think Outside The Box

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Habits to Help Yourself With

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You are about to learn approaches, which are considered essential for a good sleep hygiene. Remember, no matter the type of sleep problem you've got, sleep hygiene significantly minimizes its symptoms, and also prevents other sleep disorders from adding to your troubles.

Below you will find a list of simple, yet effective changes you can make, to help yourself. Please note that you should apply these for no less than a two-week period, to see any real results. In fact, it is strongly recommended that you engage in these practices for a month or more, to allow your body to adjust, as well as achieve results. Ultimately, you'd benefit most from making these behaviors a permanent part of your life.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center, with the text "EXPLORABLE" in a large, bold, sans-serif font and "Quiz Time!" in a smaller, cursive font below it. Below the logo are three quiz cards, each with a different image and title:

- Card 1: Image of red roller skates on a wooden deck. Title: "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2".
- Card 2: Image of a fan of colorful pens. Title: "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2".
- Card 3: Image of a Ferris wheel at sunset. Title: "Quiz: Flags in Europe".

At the bottom right of the banner is a link that says "See all quizzes =>".

Set a Regular Sleep Schedule

This is the golden rule. You should set an alarm to wake up at the same time every day. Do this for at least three to four consecutive weeks (yes, that includes the weekend as well).

Let's imagine you go to bed at ten but fall asleep a couple of hours later. You should change the time you go to bed then, so you don't toss and turn as much. Of course, you should also go to bed at the same time, every evening.

It is also important to try not to stress too much about being unable to fall asleep right after you go to bed - that's expected at this point.

What's the point?

Regardless of how much sleep you got, willing yourself to wake up at the same time each morning is vital. This way, you'd allow your brain to restore its normal circadian rhythm.

Restrict Bedroom Use

Limit the amount of time you spend in your bedroom. Some people work, read, eat, exercise and do just about every activity there. Your bedroom, especially the bed, should only be used for two things: sleeping and sexual activity.

If you limit your bedroom use to these two, you'll inevitably associate it with relaxing good times and will eventually become prone falling asleep, while in it.

If you don't have enough space or are renting a room, try to separate your desk or work area from your actual bed with curtains or a distinctly different decoration.

Going out more often and engaging some in more frequent daytime activities, outside the bedroom, could help too as well.

Control the Environment or Yourself

Remember the external factors that can either help or disturb your sleeping patterns: light, sound, temperature, touch. When trying to get rid of a sleep disorder, you can use those factors to your advantage.

That means keeping your bedroom dark during the night and allowing some light during the day. If you're accustomed to using your computer or phone, while lying in bed, seizing to do so will require a lot of willpower, but in the end, it will benefit you. The light from the screen increases your neural activity and makes it harder for your body to prepare internally for sleep, even if you feel relaxed or tired.

Screens - Only Out of Bed

If you feel like checking into your social network or watching some TV before going to sleep, it would be best to do it before actually getting into bed. Cozy up on the sofa and set a specific time for these activities if you'd like, but keep the glow of the screens away from your bedroom for a month.

Light is the most important external factor; it's also the one you have most control over. However, now that you know how sound, temperature and touch can affect your sleep ^[1] as well, control them as best as you can.

Beware of Caffeine and Alcohol

Whatever you do, don't underestimate the impact these beverages can have on your sleep. To achieve healthy and restorative sleep, it is crucial to recreate your sleep pattern, so that it is perfectly suited to you, as an individual. That being said, you can imagine how detrimental the influence of external substances can be.

Caffeine

You should avoid drinking caffeinated beverages (coffee, sodas, chocolate, and tea mainly) anywhere from four to six hours before bedtime since they act as stimulants. Even if you don't feel like caffeinated beverages have any particular effect on you, the effect might be something you would have never expected. So why not try it for a month?

Alcohol

When it comes to alcohol intake, avoid it altogether during your trial month, if possible. If not, just make sure you don't go overboard. Alcohol is a depressant, and although it may make you feel somewhat sleepy, it only sedates you, which means you don't go through the necessary stages of sleep.

Using your common sense and best judgment is what would benefit you most – a glass of wine or a beer every now and again won't hurt, but if you increase the amount things may quickly change for the worse. Also, heavy meals disrupt sleep as well. Please be mindful of what you have for dinner during this time and make a safe bet by eating healthy food.

Give Yourself a Break

It won't do you any good to lay in bed thinking about how awful it is to suffer through yet another sleepless night, or how tired you will feel the next day.

There is no room for defeat or despair here. After all, since you are reading these lines, you are already taking a positive step towards improving your life and health. So there is absolutely no use in beating yourself up - give yourself a break.

Start Right Now

Implement these steps as soon as you can, and prepare yourself mentally for them. Enjoy that cup of coffee at breakfast (instead of late afternoon), go for a walk in the sun, if you can, watch a good movie and have a beer (yes, one) over dinner with friends on a special occasion. Associate these changes with healthy, happy times, and it will become much easier to implement them.

Sometimes rules will get a little bent, and that is ok as long as you don't completely break them. Worst case scenario? You fail. Best case scenario? You try again and make it.

The keyword to achieve this successfully is consistency. So try this guide with consistency but don't knock yourself over if something happens.

Keep at it; and it will be worth it.

"It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives. It's what we do consistently."

~Anthony Robbins

Source URL: <https://explorable.com/e/habits-to-help-yourself-with?gid=21513>

Links

[1] <https://explorable.com/e/external-factors?gid=21513>