



Internal Factors

Now let's talk about those internal factors, which play a significant part in a person's sleep pattern. Just like with the external factors, at first, it may seem as though you can't do much about the internal challenges, while in fact – they are fully under your control.

Surely, you already know that our mood and feelings can be reflected by our sleeping habits, as well as the other way around. Often in literature, sleeping peacefully is used as a metaphor of an innocent conscience or a pure heart. Although that's very much a romanticized point of view, it reflects for how long we've known that what goes on in our minds can interfere with how well we sleep.

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Anxiety and Stress

They have been well-proven as primary causes of sleep difficulties. If your mind is preoccupied with a lot of thoughts and worries, it's likely you'll spend some time tossing and turning without actually falling asleep. Between work, chores, family and whatever else we've got going on, it's easier to distract ourselves from our worries during the day. In contrast, when we go to bed at night, we usually spend some quiet time thinking.

For a lot of people, this translates into worrying, and instead of getting sleepy, they get increasingly anxious. The vicious circle closes, as they tend to worry about getting a little sleep on top of everything else. Naturally, this is not done on purpose, but it may seem tough to control. A bit later on you will find some tips and techniques to help you cope.

Depression

This is a factor closely related to sleep as well. People who experience signs of depression might constantly feel drowsy and fatigued, or have a very tough time getting out of bed. Alternatively, they may not be able to fall asleep. In both instances, the irregular and unhealthy sleep pattern can only make it harder to handle depression.

One can have sleep-related problems both as a symptom and as a cause of depression. In cases of clinical depression, one of the first things doctors and psychologist acknowledge, is the individual's quantity and quality of sleep, since it is essential to the diagnosis and treatment.

Consumption of Alcohol, Caffeine, and Other Substances

Alcohol

It's a common misconception that drinking alcohol before bedtime (you know, the famous nightcap) helps induce sleep. While it's true that alcohol may make you feel relaxed and even sleepy, it does healthy sleep no good. Research has proven that alcohol consumption, before bed, negatively impacts the central nervous system. It can cause nightmares and fragmented sleep. All in all, alcohol won't help you get restful sleep, but rather it will sedate you and disrupt healthy the cycle of sleep.

Caffeine

Caffeine, one the other hand, is widely known as a stimulant, and it's obviously not associated with getting better sleep. However, some people don't feel particularly energized upon drinking coffee, tea, or other caffeinated beverages, and therefore, they take them at any time. You'd be surprised at the amount of people with sleep problems that swear caffeine has no effect on them.

While as they attempt to go caffeine-free, healthy sleep comes back to them, slowly but surely. That's because stimulants influence brain activity even up to six hours after consumption, whether or not you experience it consciously.

If you have been struggling with sleep troubles, cut caffeine out of your life for a while, just until your body gets into its natural rhythm. If that sounds like too much to handle, start by avoiding caffeine at least four to six hours before your usual bedtime.

Drugs

Medications and other drugs can also alter your sleep pattern. If you are taking prescribed medications and have noticed an alteration in your sleep pattern, it is important to let your physician know, so that they can adjust the therapy accordingly. Sometimes a slight adjustment in your prescription can make all the difference between healthy sleep and stare at the ceiling all night.

Controlled substances also inevitably meddle with your healthy sleep, in different ways, depending on whether they are stimulants, opiates, opioids, hallucinogens, or depressants.

What to Do

How we treat our body and mind is reflected on how we sleep. These inner factors are proven to cause disruptive sleep, but it has also been proven that we can do something about them. In the case of stress, anxiety, and depression, we can apply several calming techniques that will be discussed later on.

When it comes to the use of substances, it's best to try and abstain for a period, to give your body a push in the right direction. If you're still unsure that caffeine and alcohol consumption are related to your sleep disorder, at least give it a try (after all, it's only temporary), like many others, you'll most likely experience a difference.

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