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Keeping a Sleep Journal

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To keep a sleep journal or a record of your sleep pattern is another widely used CBT technique. You see, it's relatively easy to read all the recommendations and start putting them to practice; committing to the new routine long-term is the tricky part.

Everything you've learned by now requires effort and patience to work. As a result, some may start out high and practice everything, but quickly fall back into old habits. Perhaps because they're used to their old pattern, or maybe because it's easier. More importantly, people may sometimes do this without noticing at all.

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Quiz Time!

Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2

Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2

Quiz: Flags in Europe

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The Benefits

It's not unusual to think you've got everything in check because you're making such an effort, when in fact, you're not applying the most important sleep hygiene parameters. This is where a sleep journal comes in handy.

A sleep journal is a simple way of tracking your habits, and more importantly - your progress. It takes a few minutes to fill out, and in that little time you learn a great long-term benefit - having a record of your sleep-related behavior keeps you accountable for your actions.

Helps Fights Cognitive Distortions

Having a sleep diary also helps identify those cognitive distortions you now know about. When persistent automatic, negative thoughts kick in, you can challenge them with realistic evidence from your sleep record.

A Journal to the Rescue

On a particularly rough night, you may feel so defeated that you think no technique will ever work on you and that you'll never be able to sleep better. If that happens, get out of bed (as mentioned in the Stimulus Control technique) and check your sleep diary for some evidence to refute cognitive distortions (in this particular example it would be catastrophizing). Then engage in a quiet, relaxing activity and go back to bed once you feel sleepy.

Apply the Technique

Answer the Same Questions Every Day

Below you'll find a template that you can use. It's loosely based on the one provided by The American Sleep Foundation ^[1]. However, since there is no official format, you can create your own, as long as you still record what happens with as much accuracy as possible, and keep to the same questions every day.

Choose Your Favorite Format

Do you find it easier to have everything you need on one or two electronic devices, or do you prefer putting pen to paper? For your sleep journal, it is important to choose the format that is most comfortable for you, as this will encourage you to be persistent. It may be worth considering that using a notebook, or a reading device without a built-in light, will reduce the screen-light time you have at night.

Tailor the Questionnaire to Suit You

What is included in this template is necessary to fill out, but feel free to add more information that you consider it relevant.

Interpret and Evaluate

Once you have been recording your sleep pattern for a few days, see if any factors stand out either positively or negatively. What are they and how can you tweak them to your advantage?

A Month to Success

Keep writing in your sleep journal for at least one month. That way, you'll be able to see your improvement, and you will have enough data, to be able to confront cognitive distortions, as well as to gain helpful insight into your sleep.

As you already know, consistency is your best friend, when it comes to transforming your sleep pattern. Obviously, the record you keep will be subjective, but it can still help you figure out what drives your sleep pattern. Besides, keeping a journal can boost your stimulation for forming and keeping new, healthy habits.

Remember you can start using the template below or make your own.

Try it out!

Sleep Diary

In the Morning

| | |
|---|---|
| Date: | |
| Hour I went to sleep: | |
| Hours slept: | |
| Last night I fell asleep: | <input type="radio"/> Easily. <input type="radio"/> After a while. <input type="radio"/> With great difficulty. |
| Sleep disturbed by: | <input type="radio"/> External factors. <input type="radio"/> Internal factors. |
| I woke up feeling: Rate the quality of your sleep. | ? ? ? ? ? |

Before Going to Bed

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Date: | |
|--------------|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| Caffeinated drinks consumed: | <input type="radio"/> Number: <input type="radio"/> Time of day: m afternoon ____ evening ____ |
| Alcoholic drinks consumed: | <input type="radio"/> Number: <input type="radio"/> Time of day: m afternoon ____ evening ____ |
| I would describe my mood during the day as: | ? ? ? ? ? |
| Did I take a nap? | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| Did I have a heavy meal near bedtime? | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| Positive steps included in my bedtime routine: | <input type="radio"/> Sleep hygiene <input type="radio"/> Relaxing activi <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ |

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Links

[1] <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-diary/SleepDiaryv6.pdf>