

Harmful Habit: Worrying about sleep

- Now I'd like to focus on worrying while in bed, which can also contribute to insomnia.
- Sometimes just thinking about how little sleep you're getting becomes a habit that can disturb sleep.
- By now you know that what you do in bed eventually becomes associated with your bed and with your sleep habits.
 - Thinking upsetting thoughts in bed will strengthen this association
- Worrying in bed can set off a negative cycle that can lead to insomnia.
 - Worrying disrupts sleep, which makes you even more worried about how little sleep you're getting, which further disrupts sleep, and so on
- **Negative thoughts are often unrealistic and rarely helpful.**
- Some examples of negative or alarming self-talk include:
 - "I should be able to go right to sleep."
 - "I must be rested and energetic or my life will be miserable."
 - "It isn't fair that I should have to deal with this."
 - "My life has turned into a total disaster because of insomnia!"
 - "I had a bad night yesterday; this program must not be working anymore."
 - "If I don't go to sleep quickly tonight, I'll go crazy."

Helpful Habit: Replace Alarming Thoughts

- One way to change negative thoughts is to carefully considering their accuracy.
 - If they are not accurate, replacing them with more accurate and realistic thoughts can help.
 - The more you do this, the easier it will become to replace negative thoughts with realistic ones, leading to better sleep.
 - When you find yourself thinking negative thoughts, replace them by thinking to yourself the more accurate and realistic thoughts from your list rather than in exaggerated terms.
 - For example, if you think, "**I never get good sleep,**" this is very likely to be an inaccurate thought, because the key word "never" is an example of all-or-nothing thinking. Replace this negative thought with a more accurate one, something like, "***I've had good sleep in the past and although I'm having some difficulty now, I just have to practice good sleep habits in order to get good sleep again.***"
- Other examples include:
- "Having insomnia is a real hassle, but it is not 100% bad."
 - "I can't fall asleep again tonight, but I've gotten through many nights like this before."
 - "It will be that much easier to fall asleep at my bedtime tomorrow."
 - "Following the treatment can help me sleep better in the future."
 - Realistic thoughts carefully examine the **evidence** for a belief.
 - "I may not have perfect control over my sleep, but there are things I can do."
 - "Staying in bed when awake only leads to frustration."
- **Sometimes it can help to "reframe" alarming thoughts about needs or "shoulds" as preferences** (even strong preferences). For example:
 - Instead of "I need to sleep well tonight!"
 - Consider: "I hope I sleep well tonight, but if I don't, I'll cope okay."
- Instead of "My boss should be more understanding,"
- Consider: "I wish my boss was more understanding, but she isn't. That's the way she is going to act."

Remember, REALISTIC thoughts are believable balanced thoughts.

On the next page are some alternative thoughts to common sleep worries. We will review some now but you will get the most benefit if you review these ideas over the next week.

[This should be driven by the DBAS; Pick the highest scores and work backwards]

Any method of challenging these thoughts is acceptable (i.e., evidence for and against, what would you tell a friend, cost benefit analysis, imagined vs. true risk). Below we give you some potential questions to ask to start the process, give some psychoeducation points, and ONLY give potential alternative thoughts if the patient is having trouble generating their own.]

Common Dysfunctional Thoughts and Realistic Alternatives

Question:

1. **“I need 8 hours of sleep to feel refreshed and function well during the day.”**

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What are some possible alternative thoughts to this thought?
- What is the evidence for this thought?
- What is the evidence against this thought?
- While it would be nice to get 8 hours of sleep, have there been times in your past where you have received less sleep and felt refreshed and high functioning the next day?

Psycho-education:

- Remember, we all have different sleep needs that may be less during times of stress.
- Your sleep diary over the past few weeks says that you probably only need about ___ hrs of sleep on average [**insert average from past week or two**].

Possible alternative thoughts:

- Not everyone needs to get 8 hours of sleep. I seem to get by fine with less.
- I wish I could get 8 hours of sleep per night, but I seem to get by OK with less.

2. **“When I don’t get a proper amount of sleep on a given night, I need to catch up the next day by napping or the next night by sleeping longer.”**

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What are the costs of napping or sleeping in?
- If you oversleep the day after getting poor sleep, what do you think that does to your sleep drive and circadian clock?

Psychoeducation:

- If you oversleep the day after getting poor sleep, your sleep clock will be thrown out of whack and you’ll have an even more difficult time falling asleep the next night.
- Think of your sleep like a bank – when you nap during the day you “rob” from the sleep bank, and then have less sleep available the next night.
- Also, napping for longer than 30 minutes can actually make you feel even more tired when you wake up!

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- When I sleep during the day, I take away from my need to sleep at night, and make it more likely I’ll have trouble sleeping through my scheduled time in bed.
- When I don’t get as much sleep as I like, if I “press on” through the next day I’ll be more tired the next night, and more likely to fall asleep faster.
- I don’t have to nap or sleep longer the next night if I don’t get a good night’s sleep. I can press on through the next day and I will probably sleep better that night anyway!

3. “Chronic insomnia may have serious consequences for my physical health”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Do you get sick more often than others you know without insomnia?
- If people with insomnia got sick more often than others, do you think you would see that on those insomnia medicine commercials?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might make you more anxious, put more pressure for you to sleep well, and maybe cause some performance anxiety?

Psychoeducation:

- There is no evidence that insomnia is bad for your health, and no one has ever died from insomnia.
- If there was such evidence, the drug companies would be using that to sell more meds.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- Insomnia is not actually bad for my health and no one has ever died from insomnia.
- If insomnia was really bad for my health, I would have heard about it by now.

4. “I may lose control over my abilities to sleep.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have you done anything the past 4 weeks to help you control your ability to sleep?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Psychoeducation:

- Sleep is a natural occurrence that will happen, sooner or later.
- That is why it is called the gentle tyrant.
- As you have seen, you can control your sleep by controlling the time you spend in bed and by how you treat your body (e.g., no caffeine, exercise, relaxation).

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- I've already taken control of my sleep by controlling when I go to bed and wake up, not taking naps, and paying attention to how I take care of my body (e.g., no caffeine, exercise, relaxation).
- My body is a finely built machine. It will take over control and get the sleep it needs.

5. “A poor night’s sleep will interfere with my daily activities on the next day.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have there been times in the past when you had a poor night’s sleep and functioned just fine the next day?
- Have you had poor days in the past even though you had a good night’s sleep?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Psychoeducation:

- Research shows that people with insomnia function just as well as people without insomnia. They seem to be able to pool their resources when needed.
- You might feel fatigued or tired the day after a night of insomnia, but you can generally pull yourself together.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- A poor night’s sleep may interfere to some degree, but interference is a long way from complete shutdown. I can still do plenty of things.
- There have been many times in the past when I have had a poor night’s sleep and functioned just fine the next day – better than I expected the night before.

6. **“In order to be alert and function well during the day, I believe I would be better off taking a sleeping pill rather than having a poor night’s sleep.”**

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Do sleeping pills always work for you?
- Have there been times in the past when you took a sleeping pill and felt worse the next day?
- Have you learned anything in this program that seems to help you sleep just as well as medication?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might make you more anxious, put more pressure for you to sleep well, and maybe cause some performance anxiety?

Psychoeducation:

- Exactly the opposite is true. Most studies show that people who take sleep medications are MORE likely to have difficulty functioning the next day than those who don’t, because of residual side-effects of the medication (like being groggy).
- Sleeping pills may be helpful every now and then, but they will cause more sleep problems than they cure in the long run!

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- Sleeping medications can cause me to be groggy the next day. I don’t need sleep medication to treat insomnia.
- Sleeping medicines don’t really help me sleep much anymore. The skills I’ve learned here (e.g., ...) seem to be more effective, even though they are sometimes harder.

7. **“When I feel irritable, depressed, or anxious during the day, it is mostly because I did not sleep well the night before.”**

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have you ever felt irritable, depressed, or anxious during the day even though you had a good nights sleep? What about the opposite, have you felt fine the next day after a bad nights sleep?
- What else could be the cause of these feelings?
- What about people without insomnia? Don’t they ever feel irritable, depressed, or anxious during the day?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Psychoeducation:

- Although insomnia may make you feel a little more irritable, depressed, or anxious the next day, most often those feelings are related to other things as well (e.g.,...)
- Many people with insomnia don’t have any more irritability, depressed or anxious emotions than people without insomnia.
- Many people without insomnia are also irritable, depressed, or anxious during the day, so it can’t be all insomnia’s fault.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- Insomnia is not always the cause of negative feelings, sometimes I can just have a bad day for no reason.
- It’s normal for people to have days like this even without insomnia. Insomnia may be partially to blame, but there are probably some other reasons as well.

8. “When I sleep poorly on one night, I know it will definitely disturb my sleep schedule for the whole week.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have you ever had a good nights sleep the next night after a bad nights sleep?
- How has your sleep been the last few weeks when you have been keeping a regular schedule regardless of how you slept at night?
- What else could have caused your sleep schedule to get off track in the past?
- Do you think it might be the behaviors you used to engage in after a poor nights sleep (e.g., sleeping in, napping, caffeine, going to bed too early) that may have disrupted your sleep schedule in the past?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Psychoeducation:

- Research shows that after a poor night sleep, people with insomnia often have a good nights sleep the next night.
- Insomnia in and of itself doesn't cause your schedule to get out of whack, it is the behaviors you used to cope with insomnia, such as sleeping in, napping, going to bed too early, which disrupted your sleep drive and circadian rhythm, resulting in a poor week.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- As long as I don't sleep in or nap the day after a bad night's sleep, my sleep the next and subsequent nights should be better, not worse.
- If I start to worry and anticipate a bad night or week, this can often become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

9. “Without an adequate night's sleep, I can hardly function the next day.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have there been times in the past when you had a poor night's sleep and functioned just fine the next day?
- Have you had poor days in the past even though you had a good night's sleep?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?
- Do you have to function at your best the next day? Have there been days in your life when you didn't function at your best, but it was good enough?

Psychoeducation:

- Research shows that people with insomnia function just as well if not better than people without insomnia. They seem to be able to pool their resources when needed.
- You might feel fatigued or tired the day after a night of insomnia, but you can generally pull yourself together.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- A poor night's sleep may interfere to some degree, but interference is a long way from complete shutdown. I can still do plenty of things.
- There have been many times in the past when I have had a poor night's sleep and functioned just fine the next day– better than I expected the night before.
- I don't have to function at my best, I just have to function, and that will probably be good enough.
- I can still function the next day after an inadequate night's sleep. I've done it before and I can do it again.

10. “I can’t ever predict whether I’ll have a good or poor night’s sleep.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have you ever had a good nights sleep the next night after a bad nights sleep?
- How has your sleep been the last few weeks when you have been keeping a regular schedule regardless of how you slept at night?
- What happens to your sleep after you sleep in, take a long afternoon nap, drink a lot of coffee, go to bed too early? Can you predict that you will have a poor nights sleep after that?
- What about when you restrict your time in bed and take care of your body (e.g., no caffeine, exercise, relaxation)? Are you more likely to have a good night’s sleep then?

Psychoeducation:

- Research shows that after a poor night sleep, people with insomnia often have a good nights sleep the next night.
- Insomnia in and of itself doesn’t cause your schedule to get out of whack, it is the behaviors you used to cope with insomnia, such as sleeping in, napping, going to bed too early, which disrupted your sleep drive and circadian rhythm, resulting in a poor week.
- When you follow the instructions we’ve been talking about, you often have a good nights sleep.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- As long as I continue to practice good sleep habits (e.g., follow my new sleep plan) my sleep should be pretty good.
- When I practice bad sleep habits (e.g., do things like sleep in, nap, go to bed too early, not exercise, drink too much coffee, work too close to bedtime) my sleep might be poor.
- I can stay on track with my sleep schedule, even if I sleep poorly one night, and I should sleep better the following night anyway.
- Some fluctuations in sleep quantity or quality is normal. As long as I am following the sleep plan and my average night’s sleep is improving, then I am on the right track.
- Prediction gets me nowhere and isn’t useful to me. I am able to deal with a bad night’s sleep if it happens.

11. “I have little ability to manage the negative consequences of disturbed sleep.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have there been times in the past when you had a poor night’s sleep and functioned just fine the next day?
- What coping skills have you learned to deal with a night of insomnia (e.g., relaxation, ...)
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Psychoeducation:

- Research shows that people with insomnia function just as well as people without insomnia. They seem to be able to pool their resources when needed.
- You might feel fatigued or tired the day after a night of insomnia, but you can generally pull yourself together.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- A poor night’s sleep may interfere to some degree, but interference is a long way from complete shutdown. I can still do plenty of things. I’ve coped in the past (by doing ...), I’ll cope in the future.
- There have been many times in the past when I have had a poor night’s sleep and functioned just fine the next day – better than I expected the night before.
- I can manage any consequences of disturbed sleep. I have good coping skills to do this, if it occurs.
- The next time I have a bad nights sleep I will do my best to ignore it and go about my daily routines anyway
- The only thing I can control is my own behavior.

12. “When I feel tired, have no energy, or just seem not to function well during the day, it is generally because I did not sleep well the night before.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have you ever felt tired, had no energy, or just not functioned well during the day even though you had a good nights sleep? What about the opposite, have you felt fine the next day after a bad nights sleep?
- What else could be the cause of these feelings (e.g., illness, overexertion, post-lunch dip, boredom, sitting too long)?
- Don't people without insomnia ever feel tired, have no energy, or just seem not to function well during the day?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Psychoeducation:

- Although insomnia may make you feel a little more tired, have no energy, or just seem not to function well during the day the next day, most often those feelings are related to other things as well (e.g.,...)
- Many people with insomnia are not any more tired during the day than people without insomnia. Research shows in general, people with insomnia are less able to sleep during the day than people without insomnia.
- Many people without insomnia also tired, have no energy, or just seem not to function well during the day, so it can't be all insomnia's fault.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- There are many things that can cause me to feel tired or have reduced energy (e.g., illness, overexertion, post-lunch dip, boredom, sitting too long) — insomnia is not the only cause of these feelings.
- It's normal for people to have days like this even without insomnia. Insomnia may be partially to blame, but there are probably some other reasons as well.
- If I'm tired I'll probably get good sleep that night.

13. “Insomnia is the result of a chemical imbalance.”

Generating altherts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have you learned anything in this program that seems to tell you that insomnia may be the result of poor sleep habits (e.g.,...)?
- If there was such evidence, wouldn't the drug companies be using that to sell more meds?

Psychoeducation:

- There is zero evidence to show that insomnia is the result of a chemical imbalance.
- If there were, the drug companies would be using that to market their drugs.
- If this was true, sleep medications would continue to work long-term.
- If this was true, then changing your behaviors wouldn't have changed your sleep.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- There is no evidence out there suggesting I have a chemical imbalance due to insomnia, which is why I am working on my own behaviors to fix my insomnia!
- There is actually evidence against it. Consider the billions of dollars the drug companies spend trying to find this evidence. If there was an imbalance to blame they probably would have found it by now and it would be all over TV.
- The skills I've learned here (e.g., ...) show me that behaviors have much more to do with insomnia than chemical imbalances.

14. “Insomnia is ruining my ability to enjoy life and prevents me from doing what I want.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have there been times in the past when you had a poor night’s sleep and still enjoyed the next day?
- Have you had poor days in the past even though you had a good night’s sleep?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Psychoeducation:

- Research shows that people with insomnia have about the same quality of life as those without insomnia.
- People with insomnia do sometimes talk themselves out of doing things after a night of insomnia, which just perpetuates the insomnia.
- You might feel fatigued or tired the day after a night of insomnia, but you can generally pull yourself together and go out and enjoy things.
- Insomnia cannot prevent you from doing or not doing something you want. That is your choice.
- Although you may not enjoy something quite as much due to fatigue after insomnia, you will still probably enjoy it more than not doing it at all.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- I can still enjoy life and do things I want with insomnia.
- A poor nights sleep may interfere to some degree, but interference is a long way from complete shutdown. I can still do plenty of things.
- There have been many times in the past when I have had a poor nights sleep and still enjoyed things the next day– better than I expected the night before.
- It would be much more accurate to say that insomnia can occasionally affect my ability to enjoy life to its fullest and sometimes affects how much I enjoy doing things. But I don’t need to turn it into a catastrophe. I have a plan for how to improve it.

15. “Medication is probably the only solution to sleeplessness.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Do sleeping pills always work for you?
- If medications were the cure, shouldn’t people be able to quit taking them once the insomnia is gone, like with infections and antibiotics?
- Have you learned anything in this program that helps you sleep as well as medication?

Psychoeducation:

- Research actually shows just the opposite.
- Sleeping pills may be helpful every now and then, but they will cause more sleep problems than they cure in the long run!
- The things you are learning in this treatment are the only proven long-term solution to insomnia. Medications are only useful for the short-term.
- If medications were the cure, then people would only need to take them for a few weeks and then the insomnia would go away, like with antibiotics.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- If medications were really the solution, I probably wouldn’t be here.
- Medication can be helpful for short-term insomnia. However, the research is clear that medication is not a good solution over the long run.
- Sleeping medicines don’t really help me sleep much anymore. The skills I’ve learned here (e.g., ...) seem to be more effective, even though they are sometimes harder.

16. “I have to avoid or cancel obligations (social, family) after a poor night’s sleep.”

Generating alternative thoughts:

- What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against this thought?
- Have there been times in the past when you had a poor night’s sleep and still enjoyed social or family activities?
- How do you think believing this thought affects your sleep? Do you think it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy?
- Do you think skipping out on activities improves or worsens your sleep?

Psychoeducation:

- People with insomnia feel fatigued or tired the day after a night of insomnia, but they can generally pull themselves together and go out and enjoy things.
- People with insomnia do sometimes talk themselves out of doing things after a night of insomnia, which just perpetuates the insomnia.
- Insomnia cannot prevent you from doing or not doing something you want. That is your choice.
- Although you may not enjoy something quite as much due to fatigue after insomnia, you will still probably enjoy it more than not doing it at all.

Possible alternative Thoughts:

- I can still enjoy life and do things I want with insomnia.
- A poor nights sleep may interfere to some degree, but interference is a long way from complete shutdown. I can still do plenty of things.
- There have been many times in the past when I have had a poor nights sleep and still enjoyed things the next day– better than I expected the night before.
- It would be much more accurate to say that sometimes after a night of insomnia I might not enjoy family or social activities as much, but if I skip them, I won’t enjoy them at all, and it may hurt my sleep even more.
- Even if I get a poor nights sleep, I can still chose to participate in social activities and family obligations. My insomnia doesn’t control my life.
- Cancelling important events just helps perpetuate the insomnia.