

Sleep, Sleep Everywhere, but Not a Single Z In Me
(The Laments of Anyone Who Can Not Sleep) as of 1/29/02

by

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“If, my dear, you seek to slumber,
Count of Stars an endless number,
If you continue wakeful
Count the drops that make a lakeful,
Then if vigilance yet above you
Hover, count the 6times I love you,
And if slumber still repel you,
Count the times I do not tell you.
-Franklin Pierce Adams from Lullaby

Have you ever had trouble sleeping? Even once counts.
List things you do when you have trouble sleeping.

If you have ever experienced a problem with sleep, you are not alone. Insomnia is a common complaint, and most people have had problems either falling asleep or staying asleep at one time or another. It may be very infrequent (once or twice), or it may be a continuing problem. However, there are ways in which you can improve your sleep simply by changing the stimulus variables which affect it. This is often called stimulus control.

Stimulus Control – what we do is influenced by the environment around us. Stimuli are paired with other stimuli in classical conditioning. In operant learning, stimuli become the signals or cues for the behavior. More technically, stimulus control means that a response occurs more frequently in the presence of one stimulus than in the presence of another. Stimulus control often results from discrimination training, in which a behavior is reinforced or punished in the presence of one stimulus and extinguished or allowed to recover in the presence of another stimulus.

The issue of stimulus control is often at work in sleep. Some people fall asleep as soon as they lay down, even if they had planned to stay up and read for awhile. For these people, the bed or bedroom is a cue to fall asleep. However, for poor sleepers, the bed and bedroom are cues for alertness and activity, such as eating, watching TV, worrying, planning, etc. Even if they feel

tired, they “wake up” once they go to bed. Often, these people are able to sleep well in different environments (i.e. the living room couch).

There are things you can do to increase your chances of a good night’s sleep. This is often called “good sleep hygiene”. Some of these rules are listed below.

Some Commonly Stated Good Sleeping Routines, Setting Events, Practices, Stimulus Conditions, Environmental Conditions

- If possible try to wake up at same time every day
- Don’t stay in bed if you’re not sleeping
- Don’t take naps at other times of the day.
- Don’t exercise before bedtime (no strenuous exercise after 6 PM) However, regular exercise, especially in the early afternoon, can increase sleep quality.
- Don’t look at the clock
- Reduce or eliminate nicotine, caffeine, alcohol (no alcohol within 2 hours of bedtime, no caffeine within 6 hours of bedtime, no smoking within several hours of bedtime)
- Don’t go to bed if you’re not tired
- Keep light and noise to a minimum
- Keep temperature comfortable
- Don’t eat a big meal or drink a lot of fluids before bed. You can have a light snack, but if you wake up in the night, don’t have a snack. You may start waking up feeling hungry.
- Don’t use your bed for any activity besides sleep and sex
- Establish pre-sleep routines (lock door, brush teeth,, other personal nighttime habits, set alarm, etc.)
- If you don’t fall asleep within 10 minutes, get up and go into another room
- Some contend reading in bed until asleep is good. Dull reading is probably best. Francis Bacon stated that some readings are to be chewed and slowly digested. Other readings are to be bitten and spit out. The latter material is the kind to be used when sleeping is a problem. Certain types of readings can be so stimulating that they may actually keep you awake.
- Engage in an activity that will interfere with what keeps you awake (i.e. if you are worrying about personal problems, do an activity that will force you to think of something else)
- Engage in an activity that will produce relaxation (i.e. listening to soft music, for some, any religious activity such as praying, Jacobson’s relaxation procedures, going through memorized lists to “get your mind off” stimuli that may be keeping you awake, counting sleep, etc.)

If you are having problems sleeping, record your sleeping habits in a sleep log. This will help you: become more aware of your actual sleep patterns, find out what might be causing or maintaining your sleep problems, and help you adhere to a program to help you sleep.

Student's answers

Sleeping pills/Nyquil/Pain medication – 11
Alcohol – 10 (Some question based on quality sleep)
Warm Milk/Tea/Hot Cocoa – 8
Snacks – 4
Marijuana – 1
Cigarettes – 1
Read – 22
Watch TV/ Movies – 21
Listen to music – 13
Fantasize/Think -- 9
Exercise – 8
Count – 8
Study/Homework – 4
Write – 3
Internet – 3
Lay there – 3
Hum/Sing – 2
Toss and turn/move around – 2
Get out of bed – 2
Talk on phone – 1
Sex – 1
Masturbation – 1
Cry – 1
White Noise – 1
Clean – 1
Go to bathroom – 1
Make lists – 1
Cuddle – 1
Sleep somewhere else – 1

Shower/Bath – 7
Breathing exercises – 4
Relax muscles – 4
Pray – 3
Concentrate – 2
Massage – 2
Cover eyes – 1
Fresh air – 1