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## GOT SLEEP? NO? Then this article's for you

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One common problem of grief is trouble sleeping. If you can't get to sleep or stay asleep, you aren't alone.

When we sleep, we go through four stages, with each succeeding stage giving us deeper sleep. During the first 90 minutes or so we go through a complete cycle from 1 to 4 and then back to 3, 2, and 1. At this point we move into a few minutes of REM sleep where some of our dreaming takes place. These cycles continue through the night.



**A couple years ago I read an excellent book by James Mass, Ph.D. titled, *Sleep for Success*. What follows are suggestions from his book that may help you attain more zzzz:**

1. Determine your Personal Sleep Quotient:
  - ◆ Pick a bedtime when you're likely to fall asleep quickly that's at least 8 hours before you need to get up. Keep at it for a week writing down when you automatically wake up each morning.
  - ◆ If you need an alarm to wake up after 8 hours or if it's difficult to get out of bed, 8 hours wasn't enough. So, get in bed 15-30 minutes earlier for the next week.
  - ◆ Continue doing this until you awaken without an alarm.
2. Critical that you: Go to bed at the same time and wake up naturally at the same time every day.
3. Make up for lost sleep by going to bed earlier for a few days rather than sleeping later.
4. No caffeine after 2 p.m.
5. Your bedroom should mainly be for rest and sleeping, cool (65 degrees), be dimmed prior to going to bed, be dark as possible, have no noise, and have nothing else on your bed.

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6. Just before bed take a warm shower. This will raise your temperature and relax you. When you hit your 65-degree bedroom, your temperature will plummet, which is good for sleep inducement.
  7. Read something that will make you drowsy.
  8. Never forget: It takes a well-rested person 15-20 minutes to fall asleep.
  9. What if you can't stop tossing and turning?
    - ◆ Whenever restlessness persists for more than 15 minutes, go to another room.
    - ◆ Do anything that is relaxing or moderately boring.
    - ◆ It usually takes 15-20 minutes to start to feel sleepy again and then go back to bed.
  10. The lowest time of the day for most people is 2-4 p.m. If you take a nap, you have two options to set your alarm to awaken at 20 minutes **or** 90 minutes. This is when you are in your lightest sleep and won't feel so groggy when you awaken. Caution: if you have a history of insomnia, do all you can to fight taking a nap because it will disrupt your next sleep. If you must nap, make it 20 minutes.
  11. Good news for students: Taking a nap or going to sleep at night right after studying will help the information stay in your brain.
  12. What's wrong with sleeping in on the weekends? It disrupts your sleep cycle. Here you are trying to go to bed at 10 p.m. on Sunday only to find you can't fall asleep, so you're a zombie on Monday.
  13. Studies show that sleeping more than 9 hours may cause as many health problems as short sleep.
  14. Cornell study: Students who averaged 9 hours sleep got better grades than those who slept 6 hours.
  15. To wake yourself up, expose yourself to light for 15 minutes.
  16. If you have insomnia problems, do the following:
    - ◆ Stay up until you are so tired that you go to sleep immediately when your head hits the pillow. Do this for a few nights, then begin to gradually move your bedtime back.
    - ◆ Once you begin to move your time back, make sure to force yourself to start your bedtime rituals early enough to slip into the bed at the time you plan.
    - ◆ If the problem persists, consult with your doctor.
  17. What if you don't feel sleepy until 2 or 3 a.m.? You have *Delayed Sleep Phase Disorder* (7-16% of the population have this problem.) You can be helped with light therapy:
    - ◆ Expose yourself to natural light or artificial daylight spectrum light earlier in the day.
    - ◆ Then, at night dim the lights at least two hours before bedtime. No staring at a computer, TV or phone in the last hour prior to sleep. When you do this, the light directed to your eyes tells your brain to stay alert.

Changing your sleep habits takes a good deal of effort. Fight the tendency to slip back into your old habits. Don't continue to fool yourself that you can "get by" with 5-6 hours' sleep. Most everyone needs 7.5-8.5 hours sleep each night. Do it. For many people, grief disrupts sleep. As much as you can, follow the suggestions for better sleep. Your life will be better for it!