

Sleep Hygiene:

DO's and DON'Ts for Establishing Good Sleep Routines

DO:

- get up every day at the same time (one hour later maximum on weekends).
- go to bed at the same time every day, if possible, especially Sunday through Thursday.
- keep the bedroom at the right temperature and humidity (not overly warm*),
- avoid napping, especially after three o'clock in the afternoon. If you must, nap for less than thirty minutes before three o'clock in the afternoon.
- exercise regularly, preferably in the morning or afternoon.
- have a relaxing activity ninety minutes before sleep, such as soaking in a hot bath.
- try to get as much early morning sunlight each day as you can by leaving the blinds open. Try to get at least fifteen minutes of natural daylight between seven o'clock and nine o'clock in the morning.
- get out of bed if you can't sleep and engage in a relaxing activity—but not electronics.
- teach yourself breathing relaxation techniques (Appendix G) or other calming techniques to relax, e.g., yoga.
- check with your doctor if you cannot fall asleep within a reasonable amount of time.

DON'T:

- stay in bed when you cannot sleep.
- sleep outside of the bedroom.
- read in bed or watch TV while lying in bed. Bed should be used only for sleep.
- use electronics like computers, video

games, or TV before bedtime, as they are overstimulating.

- drink caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea, or soda four to six hours before bedtime.
- drink fluids one hour before bedtime.
- eat spicy foods or heavy meals before bedtime.
- exercise strenuously before bedtime.
- have strong sensory input in the bedroom (e.g., loud music, bright lights, very hot temperatures, strong smells).
- use nicotine shortly before bedtime.

For those who are staying up too late and can't seem to wake up on time, you can try adapting an approach known as *chronotherapy*:

- Estimate the current amount of sleep you are getting each night, then add fifteen minutes.
- Work backwards from wake-up time to determine what time you need to go to bed to get that much sleep
- Go to bed at the new calculated time.
- Get up at wake-up time, no matter what.
- Continue until that pattern is well established; then add fifteen minutes to allow more time in bed.
- Continue with this program until you are getting enough sleep each night (nine hours for adolescents).

For students who can't wake up, parents may wish to try the **Four Alarm Clock System** from *Teaching the Tiger* (Dornbush and Pruitt 1995):

For thirty days, assist your child with the following protocol:

- Purchase two dual alarm clock radios. Place one next to the child or adolescent's bed and the other across the room.
- Set the first alarm on the bedside alarm clock to play music of the child's choosing forty-five minutes before it is time to get up. The child can hit the snooze button as desired.

* A lot of children and adolescents with the disorders discussed in this book often report that they keep their air conditioner on all year because they are always hot. Parents of such children and teens should be encouraged to make sure that their kids' bedrooms are cool enough for them to fall comfortably asleep at night.

- Set the second alarm on the bedside clock radio to sound an alarm thirty minutes before it's time to get up. Permit the child to continue to hit the snooze button.
- Set the first alarm on the clock radio across the room to play music on a different station of the child's choice fifteen minutes before it is time to get up. Allow the child to return to the bed after hitting the snooze button.
- Set the second alarm on the clock radio across the room to sound when it is time to get up. Do NOT permit the child to return to the bed after this one has gone off. Have the child start getting ready for school.

For the next thirty days, the child is responsible for utilizing the alarm clock system to wake up alone without help.

- Make breakfast of the child's choosing available for one hour after the designated wake-up time.
- The parents or adult do not wait beyond that hour to assist the wake-up process but continue on with their day and will help get the child to a location as needed if it is convenient to the parent or adult. Consequences for late to school or work are the natural ones that occur for everyone and are sufficient without comment by the assisting adult. True sleep disorders are a medical problem and do not deserve anger or judgment.
- Remember to be clear about "Who owns the problem?" Do not take on someone else's responsibilities—it is insulting and disrespectful to them. It is understandable to want to save people you love from failure, but it is not helpful to them in the long run.