

## Your Sleep - Beauty or Beast?

What's your relationship with sleep? Something you anticipate with pleasure, or dread? Is it a time of calm and sanctuary or a source of distress and hopeless struggle?

The number of people reporting sleeping problems is rising, and if it hasn't happened to you, then you'll probably have heard more than one of your friends talking about a lack of sleep.

It is such a common problem; 10% of the adult population suffers from insomnia yet we routinely ignore its importance. **Sleep is just as much a pillar of wellbeing as diet and exercise, yet most people take it for granted.** We have become almost arrogant in our approach, assuming that we can burn the candle at both ends and suffer no consequences.

Yet if you've ever had a run of poor nights you'll know how utterly debilitating lack of sleep is. That's why sleep deprivation is used as a form of torture! You feel desperate, at your wit's end, finding it ever harder to think straight and get through the day. It really can ruin your life.

As well as making you feel rotten, lack of sleep also has a massively detrimental impact on how your mind and body performs. Insomnia interferes with a whole range of fundamental body processes so you are more likely to experience weight gain, high blood pressure, lowered immune response, impaired judgment, lack of concentration and poor memory.

**In short, insomnia affects every aspect of your life: your health, your relationships, your work, your home and social life.**

It is normal to have times when your sleep is disrupted. A new baby at home is the classic. Or a temporarily unsettling time in your life. However, these temporary disruptions can quickly turn into longer-term problems. Unlike poor diet and lack of exercise, where it can take months and even years for the effects to have an impact, sleep problems can get established very quickly. So take action as soon as you notice.

### **So what can you do if you are suffering?**

I have worked with many clients who have almost given up hope of sleeping well again. They have convinced themselves that they are beyond help; they have completely lost confidence in their ability to enjoy a normal night's sleep.

I tell them this is just the ravings of a sleep-deprived mind! In my experience, once you take sleep seriously, even the most hardened insomniac can learn how to sleep well again in a matter of just a few weeks. (Of course there are exceptions, such as people with underlying medical conditions or medication that is contributing to insomnia so it's always a good idea to consult your GP.)

Learning how to sleep well again is not just about relaxation, although that plays an important part. You need a holistic approach:

- 1. Review your life style.** Stop running round like a Duracell Bunny! Bring more calm into your days and consider aspects of your diet and nutrition that may be contributing to the problem. If you do have a situation that is causing you worry, then seek outside help. **It's important to remember however that you can still learn how to sleep well, even in troubling times.** Moreover, good quality sleep will help you weather the storm.
- 2. Re-educate your thoughts.** One of the biggest differences between someone who sleeps well and someone who lies awake for hours is not that the good sleeper never wakes up at night. They do, maybe several times! **But they don't panic about waking up.** For them it's no big deal. They have confidence that they will soon be back in the land of nod again... and so they are.
- 3. Re-train your body to expect good sleep.** Lying awake for hours at night weakens the good sleep habit. The bedroom stops becoming a place associated with rest and instead turns into the opposite; a place where you become anxious and unable to relax. By using techniques to re-educate your body and re-align your sleep patterns, you will soon find that your bedroom becomes a place of calm and sleep.

If you'd like to know more about how I can help you overcome your sleep problems just get in touch. frances@francestaylor.net 0796 796 8821

Here's wishing you Sweet Dreams!