

SLEEP RESTRICTION

ONE OF THE KEYS TO CHANGING YOUR SLEEP BEHAVIOR

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What is it?

Sleep restriction involves restricting the amount of time you spend in bed to the amount of time that you currently spend asleep.

Why would this be helpful?

Research has demonstrated that sleep restriction is a powerful technique for improving sleep. Although it can be a bit of an adjustment at first, most people find that it is not much worse than their current difficulties with sleep. In general, most people notice that their sleep improves considerably within just a few weeks. Sleep restriction initially produces a mild state of sleep deprivation, which, after only a few weeks, helps people fall asleep faster, stay asleep longer and improve their overall quality of sleep.

How do I do it?

Example:

Your usual bedtime is 10:00 PM and you get out of bed in the morning at 6:00 AM. With this routine there is an 8-hour period during which you are in bed trying to sleep.

However, if it takes you 1 hour to fall asleep and you wake-up for 30 minutes during the middle of the night and 30 minutes before you get out of bed, you spend a total of 6 hours sleeping and 2 hours awake.

Your sleep efficiency (the percent of time you are actually asleep during the time period you are trying to sleep) is 75%.

Sleep Restriction in this case would mean decreasing the amount of time in bed (8 hours) to the estimated time actually spent sleeping (6 hours).

In this example you would adjust either your bed-time or the time you get up in the morning so that the maximum amount of time you spend in bed is 6 hours. With this example you could go to bed at 12:00 (midnight) and get up at 6:00 AM, or continue to go to bed at 10:00 PM and get up at 4:00 AM.

After sleep efficiency reaches 85% or greater, time in bed can be increased in 15-20 minute blocks. Time in bed each week is increased if 85% sleep efficiency or greater until sleep efficiency starts to fall below 80% then time in bed is decreased by 15-20 minute blocks. This process of increasing or decreasing time in bed is done until sleep efficiency falls between 80-85% on a regular basis.

Primary Care Behavioral Health