

CHOOSING SLEEP

An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Course



Dr Mike Scanlan

Please rate the **CURRENT (i.e. LAST 2 WEEKS) SEVERITY** of your insomnia problem(s).

Insomnia problem	None	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Very severe
1. Difficulty falling asleep	0	1	2	3	4
2. Difficulty staying asleep	0	1	2	3	4
3. Problem waking up too early	0	1	2	3	4

4. How SATISFIED/DISSATISFIED are you with your CURRENT sleep pattern?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Moderately Satisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied
 0 1 2 3 4

5. How NOTICEABLE to others do you think your sleep problem is in terms of impairing the quality of your life?

Not at all Noticeable A Little Noticeable Somewhat Noticeable Much Noticeable Very Much Noticeable
 0 1 2 3 4

6. How WORRIED/DISTRESSED are you about your current sleep problem?

Not at all Worried A Little Worried Somewhat Worried Much Worried Very Much Worried
 0 1 2 3 4

7. To what extent do you consider your sleep problem to INTERFERE with your daily functioning (e.g. daytime fatigue, mood, ability to function at work/daily chores, concentration, memory, mood, etc.) CURRENTLY?

Not at all Interfering A Little Interfering Somewhat Interfering Much Interfering Very Much Interfering
 0 1 2 3 4

Guidelines for Scoring/Interpretation:

Add the scores for all seven items (questions 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7) = _____ your total score

Total score categories:

0–7 = No clinically significant insomnia

8–14 = Sub threshold insomnia

15–21 = Clinical insomnia (moderate severity)

22–28 = Clinical insomnia (severe)

Our Course

Will help you to learn;

- The realities of sleep and all of the catastrophic myths that surround it.
- To use tools to calm your worrying mind and live more in the now rather than worrying about past poor quality sleep or how awful you will feel if you don't sleep.
- To notice and let go of the scripts in your head that remind you that you can't sleep or that constantly remind you of how many hours that you have left to sleep.
- To manage the emotions that keep you awake at night such as the frustration, guilt, despair and fear associated with not sleeping.
- To accept that the feelings you may get just before going to bed of a fast beating heart, a tight chest or a knot in the stomach does not decree that you are going to have another bad night.
- To smile at and ignore the unhelpful urges to get up from your bed, to have a drink of alcohol and/or take more medication.
- To shift your focus towards getting back to living your life again rather than struggling with your sleep.
- To manage any accompanying factors that could be affecting your sleep such as excessive daytime stress, anxiety, depression and tinnitus, as well as any dietary or exercise problems.

What you won't learn

We won't be telling you to drink warm goats milk before going to bed or that you need to have a warm bath (unless your grubby!).

You won't need to wind down for hours before going to bed or have to get out of bed in the middle of night and do something boring and completely unrelated to getting to sleep.

What you will leave with

Everyone leaves with a copy of the Sleep Manual.

You will also receive the unique meditations designed to boost your practice and support you on your road to a better nights sleep

Noticing and Focusing

Watch and learn

Imagine if you were locked in a bunker for a couple months stripped of your phone, laptop, watch, or any other time-telling machine and were forced to rely on your body clock. According to Jessa Gamble, the internal clock can provide us with the experience of full wakefulness when we retire our sense of day and night time.

<http://tedtalkspsychology.com/our-natural-sleep-cycle-with-jessa-gamble/>

Insomnia and ACT

Insomnia is a persistent disorder that can make it hard to fall asleep, hard to stay asleep or both. When experiencing insomnia, you usually awaken feeling tired, which takes a toll on your ability to function during the day. Insomnia can sap not only your energy level and mood but also your health, work performance and quality of life.

How much sleep is enough varies from person to person.

Many adults experience insomnia at some point, but some people have long-term (chronic) insomnia. Insomnia may be the primary problem, or it may be secondary due to other causes, such as medications or more usually what we call the paradoxical sleep affect.

Insomnia is maintained by five main thinking and linguistic processes that operate at night and during the day. These are

1. Worry
2. Unhelpful and inaccurate beliefs about sleep
3. Selective attention and monitoring
4. Counterproductive safety behaviours
5. Misperception of sleep and daytime deficits

Thus, the purpose of the treatment is to reverse all five maintaining processes during both the day and the night. ACT works well to lessen the impact of these processes.

Paradoxical thinking

A paradox is a self-contradictory statement that may nevertheless be true. For instance, the harder you try to get rid of a thought or behaviour, the stronger it seems to become. Worry and demand that something must happen and it never does.

- Blushing and sweating increase when you become embarrassed by your red, wet skin.
- Obsessive thoughts increase when you try to suppress them.
- Stuttering increases when you become self-conscious about the speech problem.
- Sleep always gets worse when start trying to sleep

Yet, when you do the opposite, i.e. try to increase the unwanted behaviour, sometimes the problem goes away. Just as trying too hard exacerbates some problems.

A person afraid of being unable to sleep actually tries to stay awake.

Tramps and Parties – [YouTube link](#)

Values Led Therapy

Your values form the foundation of your life. They dictate the choices you make and determine the direction that your life takes. Your values will influence your decisions related to your relationships, your career and yes – they influence your **sleep**. Despite this importance, few people choose their values. Instead, they simply adopt the values of their parents and their peers. In all likelihood, the values that you internalized as a child remain with you through adulthood. Unfortunately, these values may also have created a life that is carrying you down a path that is not the direction you want to go at this point in your life. Indeed the path may feel blocked!

Is your life in balance?

Below you can find areas of life which are valued by some people. This questionnaire will help clarify your own quality-of-life in each of these areas. One aspect of quality-of-life involves the importance you put on different areas of living, another is how much time you spend on each of these things.

Rate the importance of each area (by circling a number) on a scale of 1-7 where 1 means that area is not at all important and 7 means the area is very important. Not everyone will value all of these areas, or value each area the same so rate each area according to your own personal sense of importance.

Using a different colour (so you know which rating is which) please give a rating of how much time, effort and 'head space' you have put into each area in the past week, with 1 being very little time, effort and head space and 7 being the maximum.

Area

Family (other than marriage or parenting)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Marriage/couples/intimate relationships	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Parenting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Friends/social life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Education/training	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recreation/fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Spirituality/meaning & purpose in life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Citizenship/community life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Physical self-care (nutrition/exercise/rest/sleep)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Social media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7 Sleep Hygiene tips

1. Reduce Caffeine, Alcohol, Nicotine, and Other Chemicals that Interfere with Sleep

As any coffee lover knows, caffeine is a stimulant that can keep you awake. So reduce slowly or avoid caffeine (found in coffee, tea, chocolate, fizzy drinks, and some pain relievers) for up to six hours before bedtime. Similarly, smokers should choose not to smoke too close to bedtime. Although alcohol makes you drowsy, after a few hours it acts as a stimulant, increasing the number of awakenings and adversely affecting the quality of sleep later in the night. Try to limit alcohol consumption to one to two drinks per day, or less, and to avoid drinking within three hours of bedtime.

2. Turn Your Bedroom into a Sleep- friendly Environment

A quiet, restful, dark, and cool environment can help promote sleep. Keep the temperature comfortably cool and the room well ventilated. And make sure your bedroom is equipped with a comfortable mattress and pillows. It may help to use your bedroom for sleep and sex only. Keeping computers, TVs, and work materials out of the room will strengthen the mental association between your bedroom and sleep.

3. Establish a Soothing Pre-Sleep Routine

Reading a calming and absorbing book before bed is a good way to prepare you for sleep. Ideally partake in relaxing activities an hour or so before bed. Take a bath (the rise, then fall in body temperature induces sleepiness), read a book, watch calming television, or practice relaxation exercises. Choose calming activities. Activities that are physically and psychologically arousing can cause the body to release cortisol which is associated with alerting the brain for action.

4. Choose when to sleep when you feel tired

Struggling to fall sleep just leads to frustration. You choose when to sleep. Be guided by your sleep window.

5. Make the most of natural light

Natural light keeps your internal clock on a healthy sleep-wake cycle. So let in the light first thing in the morning and get out of the office for a light break during the day.

6. Nap not or Nap early

Many people enjoy a nap. For those of you who find falling asleep or staying asleep through the night problematic, afternoon napping may be one of the culprits. This is because late-day naps decrease sleep drive. If you must nap, choose to keep it short and before 5 p.m.

7. Exercise in the morning

Exercise is good for sleep as long as it's taken hours before bed, Exercise stimulates the secretion of cortisol, is alerting. This is fine, unless you're trying to fall asleep. Try to finish exercising at least three hours before bed or work out earlier in the morning.

Mindfulness

A central aim of the approach is to learn how to be more fully aware and present in each moment of life. A mindful life is more enjoyable and interesting vivid and fulfilling. On the other hand, however, this means facing what is present even when it may be unpleasant or difficult. You will find that turning to face, and acknowledge difficulties is, in the long run, the most effective way to reduce stress and increase happiness. You will learn gentle ways to be 'with' difficulties and will be supported whilst doing this.

Patience and persistence

Because we will be working with stuck patterns of mind, much of the approach will involve investing time and effort, the effects of which will become apparent further down the line. Think of it like gardening. Together we will prepare the ground, plant the seeds, and ensure that they are well watered and nourished. The results come later.

Home Practice

1. Can we live closer to what we value?
2. Breathing space meditation – 5 minutes
3. Mindfully eat one meal – every day or take a mindful shower

Valuing Life

Homework checking – Values and Mindfulness progress

Are there new values or areas of your life that you have become aware of?
Have you discovered that there may be a difference in how important a value is and how much you are acting on it?

.....
.....
.....

What were participants' experiences with practicing mindfulness in everyday life (walking, eating etc) or with practicing the meditations? Was there anything that surprised them?

So, what have you given up over the past 2 weeks because of your sleep problems?

- Going out?
- Work?
- Favourite TV shows?
- Sex?
- Friends?
- Exercise

Anything else? – How do you feel about it? Is it time to change?

Learning to defuse your worrying thoughts - The hands as 'thoughts' metaphor

Imagine will you that your hands are your thoughts. Hold your hands together side by side, palms open, as if they are the pages of an open book. Then slowly raise your hands towards your face. Keep going until they are covering your eyes.

Now look at what you can see through the gaps between your fingers, and notice how this affects your view of the world. You can put your hands down now.

Now imagine what it would be like to go around all day with your hands covering your eyes in this manner. How much would it limit you? How much would you miss out on? How would it reduce your ability to respond to life as it goes on around you? This is how restricted we are when we are fused with thoughts. We become so caught up in them that we lose contact with many aspects of our here-and-now experience, and our thoughts have such a huge influence over our behaviour that our ability to act effectively is massively reduced.

Now cover your eyes with your hands, but lower them from your face very, very slowly. As the distance between your hands and your face increases, notice how much easier it is to connect with the world around you.

This exercise can be seen as a metaphor for cognitive defusion. Was it easier to take effective action without your hands covering your eyes; how much more information you can take in; how much more connected you are with the world around you?

Fusion and Defusion

In a state of cognitive fusion we are 'caught up in' or preoccupied with thoughts. Our thoughts about sleep seem to be the literal truth: rules develop about sleep that must be obeyed; important events that require our full attention become linked to our difficulties with sleep; threatening events linked to sleep loom in our minds that we must control. When we fuse with our sleep thoughts, they have enormous influence over our behaviour.

Cognitive defusion enables us to step back psychologically and observe our Thoughts linked to our sleep without being caught up in them. We can then recognise that our thoughts are nothing more or less than 'here one minute – gone the next' private events – an ever-changing stream of words, sounds and pictures.

As we master defusing from thoughts, they have much less impact and influence over us.

I'm having the thought that...

1. Put your negative self-judgment about you and sleep into a short sentence of the ' For example, 'I'm a terrible sleeper or 'I'm useless when I haven't slept .
2. Fuse with this thought for 10 seconds – get caught up in it, give it your full attention and believe it as much as you possibly can.

3. Now silently replay the thought with this phrase in front of it: 'I'm having the thought that ...' For example, 'I'm having the thought that I'm a terrible sleeper'.
4. Now replay it one more time, but this time add this phrase 'I'm noticing I'm having the thought that ...' For example, 'I'm now just noticing that I'm having the thought that I'm a terrible sleeper'

What happened? Did you notice a sense of separation or distance from the thought? If not, run through the exercise again with a different sleep thought.

WORRYING WELL WITH WISDOM

1. Make a time each day to worry well, e.g. for minutes between 6pm - 15pm every night
2. Throughout the day, when worrying arises, acknowledge it saying: 'I'm having a worry about Or, if it's a recurrent story, give it a title, and acknowledge, 'Here's the Story'. Simpler still, silently say to yourself, 'Just worrying'. Let the thoughts come and go and bring your attention back to where you are and what you're doing.
3. Try not to push the worry away. Let the worry come and go as it pleases, while focusing your attention on an activity you value (i.e. engaging mindfully in doing things that you value). Thank your mind each time the worry reappears, or silently say or sing to yourself 'Just worrying'.
4. If it's a big, re-occurring worry, that keeps on coming back again and again, then write it down and say to yourself, 'Thanks, mind! I'll give this my full attention later, in my worry period' (If there's lots of recurrent worries, write them on a list.)
5. During your worry period, go through all the things you've been worrying about. If you've written a list, read through each worry and see if it still worries you.
6. For each worry, ask yourself: "Is there anything constructive I can do about this?" If there is something useful you can do about it, and then make a plan of action. If there's nothing you can do, then acknowledge that.
7. Finish up by practising the 'leaves on a stream' exercise - putting each worry onto a leaf, and letting it float on by. Ideally do this for about ten minutes. [See Download](#)

8. Once the worry period is over, do some meaningful activity, and engage in it fully, with all your five senses (while letting your thoughts come and go).

Leaves on a stream

(1) Sit in a comfortable position and either close your eyes or rest them gently on a fixed spot in the room.

(2) Visualize yourself sitting beside a gently flowing stream with leaves floating along the surface of the water.

(3) For the next few minutes, take each thought that enters your mind and place it on a leaf... let it float by. Do this with each thought – pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Even if you have joyous or enthusiastic thoughts, place them on a leaf and let them float by.

(4) If your thoughts momentarily stop, continue to watch the stream. Sooner or later, your thoughts will start up again.

(5) Allow the stream to flow at its own pace. Don't try to speed it up and rush your thoughts along. You're not trying to rush the leaves along or lose sight of them. You are allowing them to come and go at their own pace.

(6) If your mind says "This is silly," "I'm bored," or "this can't be right" place *those thoughts* on leaves, too, and let them pass.

(7) If a leaf gets stuck, allow it to hang around until it's ready to float by. If the thought comes up again, watch it float by another time.

(8) If a difficult or painful feeling arises, simply acknowledge it. Say to yourself, "I notice myself having a feeling of boredom/impatience/frustration." Place those thoughts on leaves and allow them float along.

(9) From time to time, your thoughts may hook you and distract you from being fully present in this exercise. This is *normal*. As soon as you realize that you have become sidetracked, gently bring your attention back to the visualization exercise.

Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation works well because it helps relieve tension in the muscles. And the mind relaxes better when the body feels less tense. It also helps distract the mind from unsettling or repetitive thoughts because you

have to focus your attention on your body and not on your mind. You can do progressive muscle relaxation exercises as part of a bedtime routine. And you can even do them while lying in bed at night.

Step by step muscle relaxation

- Take a deep breath and tense your toes and feet for a few seconds (3-4 seconds is fine), then exhale slowly and release the tension.
- Take a deep breath and tense your lower legs, hold for a few seconds and then relax again with the exhale of breath.
- Breathe in and tense your upper legs, hold and relax.
- Breathe in and tense your abdomen and lower back, hold for a few seconds and then breathe out whilst slowly relaxing.
- Repeat with your chest and upper back.
- Do the same with your hands, lower arms, then upper arms, shoulders and neck.
- Then you can tense your face – screwing it up may help to tense it properly.
- Finally you can tense your whole body, hold for a few seconds and slowly exhale whilst ensuring your whole body relaxes from the tension.
- You can repeat the final part where you tense your whole body 3 times if you like.

Relaxation MP3

Assessing progress with sleep hygiene

We don't expect you to have made all the sleep hygiene changes recommended in session 1. It is important however that we do not expect positive changes to occur immediately. Think about how long you have been practicing unhelpful sleep habits? Is it reasonable that your brain will adjust straight away?

Home Practice

1. Use the 'I'm having the thought that' exercise whenever you have anxious thoughts about sleep
2. Practice the 'worrying well with wisdom' followed at bedtime with 'leaves on a stream' on 3 nights
3. Practice the Progressive Muscular Relaxation on 4 nights before bed

Driving your bus

Home Practice Checking

Assessing progress with sleep Hygiene

How have participants found the process of diffusing thoughts?

Reflecting upon the experience of worrying well with wisdom

What affect did the relaxation have on sleep?

The Observing Self

The Observing Self is that bit of your mind that is responsible for awareness and attention. There are two parts to the mind: the thinking self – i.e. the part that is always thinking; the part that is responsible for all your thoughts, beliefs and judgments. Then there's your observing self – the part of your mind that is able to step outside and be aware of whatever you are thinking or feeling or doing at any moment. Without it, you couldn't develop skills like labelling, defusion and ultimately mindfulness. The more you practice these mindfulness skills, the more you'll become aware of this part of your mind, and able to access it when you need it.

Short observing-self exercise

Close your eyes, notice the sounds around you, make contact with your breathing

- Now start to notice: Where are your thoughts? Above you, below you, in front of you, to the right or to the left of you? Are they inside or outside your body?
- Are your thoughts images, words or sounds? Do they move around or stand still? If they move around – how fast are they moving and in which direction?
- There is your thoughts – and there is the “you” observing your thoughts
- Your thoughts change all the time. The part of “you” which is observing your thoughts does not change.
- All this can make your mind become fuzzy and maybe you start analysing or arguing – so let us try one more time. Notice where

your thoughts are ...
Conclude by returning to observation of breathing and sounds.

Control – a double-edged sword

Is wired into us and steers us away from discomfort and towards pleasure. Control behaviours are actions that are intended to avoid the experience of anxiety and discomfort. You may try in various ways to escape certain experiences that you find unpleasant and undesirable. Some general examples of this are included below.

If I don't fall asleep right now, my performance will suffer tomorrow I'll go to bed earlier.

I'll have another bad day today because I had another bad night last night, I'll have an extra glass of wine.

By choosing to do these things our behaviours are reinforced and maintained because the short-term effects often have a stronger influence on our learning than long-term effects. This can keep us trapped in the cycle of behaviour when the effect of the behaviour in the short term is experienced as positive. Using avoidance behaviour is very human and understandable but is a major problem in relation to sleep as the cost is very high in the long-term.

Control behaviour is in many ways inadequate when it is done to avoid unwanted thoughts and feelings. Avoidance behaviour undermines value-based actions. It is not possible to control our thoughts and feelings through control of the situation (i.e. avoiding it), because any situation can be (or become) associated with unwanted thoughts and feelings, and thus provoke them. This means that more and more situations must be avoided and the life you live is increasingly restricted by the sleep thoughts and beliefs that you are hooked into. The power of anxiety increases and the vitality of life decreases.

You're probably inclined to feel an immediate sense of relief when you do not have to experience an unpleasant thought, feeling or sensation - otherwise you would hardly use avoidance strategies. The relief you immediately feel strengthens your desire to use the same strategy the next time you are confronted with the possibility of dealing with unpleasant thoughts and feelings. But every time you do it, you actually increase the likelihood of further unpleasant thoughts, feelings and sensations.

We ask you to consider the possibility, however unlikely it may seem that these control and avoidance strategies *have not worked*, but also that they *cannot work*. The unhelpful behaviour simply increases the meaning and importance of what you want to avoid (sleepless nights?) - in other words, when you try to avoid your problem it grows!

Consider how strong the long-term impact of your strategies is - how much are your strategies actually changing your experiences in the long run? How much do you lose in having to maintain these strategies? How much energy do you use that could be spent on things you really care about?

Bus metaphor

Imagine that you are a bus driver and drive a bus that represents your life. The direction you drive in follows the values that are important to you, that is, the direction in life you want to head toward. The sun is shining and you're in a good mood. You control your bus.

Passengers are getting on and off. Some smile and say "hello" and "goodbye" and are in a good mood. But others look fed up or tired and complain about how you drive or the direction you are travelling in. They may think you should take a different road. They remind you of the other times you've driven in this direction and had a bad experience. They predict things that can go wrong and be upsetting. They make it hard to be a bus driver and your mood is affected the more they talk and the more passengers like them appear.

There have been times when you've tried to argue with them. You have tried to make them see reason by convincing them that your direction is correct and that you have mastered it. But all this makes you tired. Each time one good passenger boards, new difficult passengers board as well. Maybe you refuse these passengers access to the bus. You are driving past the passengers who look grumpy. But the next day they stand there again. And now they are even grumpier. Sometimes you may become so tired and discouraged that you start listening to passengers and drive in the direction they want. Finally, you may have completely forgotten where the bus was going?



????????????????

So what can you do?

You want to move in your desired direction, but your bus is always stuck when you need to discuss and argue with difficult passengers. You are tired and upset that the bus stops or that you sometimes drive in a completely different direction.

Are there other options?

If the bus is running, it appears that the only possibility you have left is to take passengers with you. Focusing on driving your bus and accepting both happy and grumpy passengers is part of being a bus driver.

Passengers are, as you might have guessed, a picture of your thoughts. And hard thoughts tend to arise when we begin to take steps in the direction we want. It cannot be avoided, it is part of being a human being, and the unpleasant thoughts cannot help but affect your mood. Some days and nights there will be few, other days many. Are you willing to welcome all passengers if this could mean that your bus will run?

Note that you can accept their presence without having to do as they say. You still control the bus while the passengers are with you for the ride.

Consider whether you have fought long enough or if you have further strategies you want to try. Consider whether your strategies will make the bus go or get stuck. Consider whether or it's time to try a new way?

The New way

So we have looked at the importance sleep hygiene. We have learnt the importance of just noticing our tramps and learning to focus on our valued lives, we've become clearer about what our valued direction is, we've developed some skills that enable us to be – 'in the moment' and we've started to master the skills of defusing thoughts that maintain our sleep

problems.

Let's put it all together within the Willingness stance

Willingness = Opening to experience your own experience as it is, directly, without trying to manipulate it, avoid it, escape it or change it.

(Willingness doesn't mean you like, want, or approve of something. It means you'll make room for it, or let it be, in order to do something that you value. Willingness means we make room for unpleasant thoughts and feelings, in order to create a meaningful life.)

Acceptance of thoughts and feelings meditation

The Guest House - By Rumi

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,

still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Home Practice

Every day – cultivate at every opportunity your observing self

Continue relaxing and worrying with wisdom

Practice on three days the Acceptance of thoughts and feelings meditation

Practice being willing to be with your thoughts and urges rather than fighting with them

The Willingness Stance

Reviewing Home Practice

How willing are people to be just 'with' their anxious/sad thoughts related to sleep?

Progress with relaxation and Worrying with Wisdom

Progress with defusion and being in your 'observing self'

How did people get on with the acceptance meditation?

Are you sure you're ready for this move to willingness?

Have a go at listing all of the different ways of thinking you have tried (deliberately or unintentionally) when thoughts and feelings regarding sleep started showing up. Underline any of the following that you have done, and write in any others:

Worrying, Dwelling on the past sleeplessness, Fantasizing about a future of perfect sleep

Imagining escape scenarios (eg leaving your job or your partner), Imagining revenge scenarios on people who keep you awake

Thinking 'It's not fair', Thinking 'If only I slept', Thinking of killing yourself, Blaming yourself for not sleeping

Blaming others, Blaming the world, Talking logically to yourself, Talking positively to yourself

Talking negatively to yourself, Analyzing yourself (trying to figure out why you are like this)

Analyzing the situation (trying to figure out why this happened), Analyzing others (trying to figure out why they do sleep)

Anything else: write down anything else you can think of you have ever tried to make yourself sleep or feel better about not sleeping. Once you've done that, go through your list and for each item, ask yourself:

1. Did this help? Did it bring me closer to a rich, full, and meaningful life?

2. If the answer to questions 1 or/and 2 is “no”, then what did this cost me in terms of time, energy, money, health, relationships, and vitality?

So find what works and....DO MORE OF IT

The Being Willing Stance

Step 1: Get in touch with your values and Goals

- Get in touch with why you are choosing to no longer battle with sleep. What valued goal are you working towards?

Step 2: Are you in the Present Moment?

- Come into the present moment by paying attention to your breathing. Follow each in breath and each out breath several times.

Step 3: Notice

- Notice and label any physical sensations linked to worries about sleep (eg., there's sweating, there's fatigue, there's rapid heartbeat).
- Notice and label any sleep focused thoughts (eg., there's worry about feeling tired tomorrow).
- Notice and label any emotions (eg., there's fear, anger, sadness).
- Notice and label any urges to control your internal experiences (e.g., there's the urge to plan how I'm going to get a full night's sleep)

Step 4: Acceptance/allowing

- Allow yourself to have all of your physical sensations, thoughts, feelings, and urges, exactly as they are without needing to change them or act on them.
- Bring a gentle curiosity, openness, and compassion to your internal experiences, welcoming each visitor to your guest house.
- Lean into the anxiety
- Drop the rope in your struggle with anxiety.
- Use the defusion strategies that work for you.
- Put your willingness switch to "On".

Willingness is always achieved in the present moment, whereas struggling usually invokes the future or the past. Start by using all four steps before and/or during each time that you find yourself in a period of worry about sleep. Eventually you may find that you need to use only one or two of the steps to assist you in switching your willingness switch to "On".

Willingness Meditation

Home Practice

Listen to the Willingness Meditation on 3 days

Use the VINA process whenever you sense struggling with sleep

Choose to live closer to what you value

Make use of 'leaves on a stream'

Maintaining your new stance

YouTube – Demons on the boat

It's not just the night – worrying in the day needs defusing!

The “Just Worrying” Labelling Technique

Worrying involves ruminative (cow chewing the cud) thinking, which is associated with anxiety and produces no practical outcomes. This technique involves a person simply labelling worry as “just worrying” and then bringing their attention back to simply changing the subject of their thinking.

Every time a person catches themselves worrying they just label it again and change the subject. It doesn't matter if a person does it 5 times in one minute or if they only realise they have been worrying after a period of 2 hours and then apply the technique. The important thing is that the person applies the technique when they realize they are worrying.

IMPORTANTLY this technique involves no criticism or internal struggle, just mindful, non-judgemental labelling. Therefore it is important in this regard that the individual does not change the label from “just worrying” to “don't worry”.

This technique is very effective and most people find that their worrying thoughts can reduce almost totally within a few days. Then they usually start worrying about a week later because they have forgotten about the technique through lack of need to use it. At that point a reminder of the technique usually suffices.

The same technique can be applied to other disturbing repetitive mental events using labels such as “just doubting” or “just criticizing”. This is subtly but significantly different to avoidance. It is not running away from the aversive mental stimulus. Rather it is the non-judgemental labelling which is encapsulated in the word “just”.

How can I keep myself on track

When we get away from our values and begin to control and avoid, the risk of falling back to old ways is increased. Becoming aware of the signals

indicating that you are moving away from your valued direction can therefore be of a great help. A “relapse prevention plan” can consist of many things and be designed in a variety of ways. It's not so important how you design it, the important thing is that you have made a plan and it is suitable for you - namely, it is realistic, reasonable and practical.

It may be helpful to recall that the purpose of treatment is not necessarily just about insomnia, but rather enabling participants to live a vital and meaningful life, even when things are hard. Therefore, the “success criteria” does not mean that you will never have another bad night's sleep – you will. Hopefully you will see a so-called “relapse” as an opportunity to further consolidate the newly learned approach. When you try to prepare for how to, also in the future, manage obstacles while continuing to move forward in life, focus on what you DO want to do rather than what you *don't* want to do!

Here is a draft of a number of points that may represent a “relapse prevention plan”:

1. What are your warning signs indicating that your worries about sleep are taking over - and that you have moved away from your values?
2. What are your strategies to getting back on your value-based sleep direction?
3. Whose support will you enlist? – make sure they understand ACT
4. What are the potential obstacles that may get in the way?

Getting Unhooked From Our Difficult Thoughts

When we have an unwanted thought, we may try to avoid it or push it away. We may also try to get rid of unwanted feelings or bodily sensations. When we get “hooked” by thoughts it is as though they push us around or bully us.

Acceptance refers to experiencing the unwanted thoughts without evaluating them or trying to change them. That is, paying attention to the experience of having the thoughts, rather than focusing on their meaning (i.e. there must be something wrong with me if I can't sleep). This doesn't mean that you have to like or want the thought. It is more to do with acknowledging that you are having the thought and that pushing it away may not have been very helpful. For example, have you noticed that when you try not to think about something (**Sleep**) that you end up thinking more about it? Distraction may help for a few minutes or hours but does it make the thoughts and feelings go away in the long term?

We can build up our willingness to have unwanted thoughts by practicing our “mindfulness”. Mindfulness skills are really helpful in developing greater awareness...so just like we can exercise to build (physical) muscle we can practice being aware to develop mental “muscle”. We need to let go of struggling to control unwanted thoughts and feelings, to focus on the here and now (anxiety thoughts normally focus on the future; depression thoughts on the past), and to act in a way that is consistent with your values. Remember rather than trying to get rid of anxious thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, you can shift your focus to what really matters to you in your life, and then in particular areas of your life, and set goals that fit with these. Learning to be more accepting (i.e. letting it be without having to change or get rid of it) of your internal dialogue, feelings and physical sensations can be challenging and you will need some time to practice so that you can keep changing old habits.

4 Quick Steps to Emotional Acceptance

1. **OBSERVE.** Bring awareness to the feelings in your body.
2. **BREATHE.** Take a few deep breaths. Breathe into and around them.
3. **EXPAND.** Make room for these feelings. Create some space for them.
4. **ALLOW.** Allow them to be there. Make peace with them Some people find it helpful to silently say to themselves, ‘I don't like this feeling, but I have room for it,’ or ‘It's unpleasant, but I can accept it.’

Please rate the **CURRENT** (i.e. **LAST 2 WEEKS**) **SEVERITY** of your insomnia problem(s).

Insomnia problem	None	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Very severe
1. Difficulty falling asleep	0	1	2	3	4
2. Difficulty staying asleep	0	1	2	3	4
3. Problem waking up too early	0	1	2	3	4

4. How SATISFIED/DISSATISFIED are you with your CURRENT sleep pattern?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Moderately Satisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied
 0 1 2 3 4

5. How NOTICEABLE to others do you think your sleep problem is in terms of impairing the quality of your life?

Not at all Noticeable A Little Somewhat Much Very Much Noticeable
 0 1 2 3 4

6. How WORRIED/DISTRESSED are you about your current sleep problem?

Not at all Worried A Little Somewhat Much Very Much Worried
 0 1 2 3 4

7. To what extent do you consider your sleep problem to INTERFERE with your daily functioning (e.g. daytime fatigue, mood, ability to function at work/daily chores, concentration, memory, mood, etc.) CURRENTLY?

Not at all Interfering A Little Somewhat Much Very Much Interfering
 0 1 2 3 4

Guidelines for Scoring/Interpretation:

Add the scores for all seven items (questions 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 +6 + 7) = _____ your total score

Total score categories:

0–7 = No clinically significant insomnia

8–14 = Sub threshold insomnia

15–21 = Clinical insomnia (moderate severity)

22–28 = Clinical insomnia (severe)