Improving Your Sleep Course

Session 4
Dealing With a Racing Mind
Session 4 Dealing With a Racing Mind

This session will:

• Help you to learn ways of overcoming the mental alertness, repetitive thoughts and anxieties that interfere with your sleep.

• Help you to identify which sleep-related thoughts are disturbing your sleep the most and what to do about them.

• Teach you how to block thoughts, use imagery, abandon clock-watching and put the day to rest.
Changing Negative Thoughts
You Can't Live a Positive Life With a Negative Mind!
Types of Thoughts

- Often people with insomnia complain of not being able to empty their mind and cannot switch off.

- Some people have got in the habit of using bedtime to think their day through.

- There are several types of thoughts that are common at bedtime – let’s have a look at these together.
Types of Thoughts

• **Rehearsing and Planning** - Thinking back over the day or looking ahead to things that are about to come up.

• **Problem Solving** – Trying to come up with a solution to a problem and this makes the mind work very hard.

• **Thinking about sleeping** - Part of the vicious circle. Remember back to session 2 where we talked about sleep-related thoughts? Putting effort into sleeping is part of the problem.
Types of Thoughts

• **Listening to your body** – Starting to focus inwards and notice how tired you are, or how awake you are will make your mind focused and prevent sleep.

• **Thinking about thinking** – ‘Why on earth did that thought come into my head?’ – worry about our thoughts makes us feel out of control.

• **Thoughts and emotions** – Disappointment, sadness, guilt, frustration and worry all resulting from thoughts make sleep more difficult.
Glasgow Content of Thoughts Inventory

Please complete the Glasgow Content of Thoughts Inventory provided from the book “Overcoming Insomnia” by Colin Espie.

This will help you to establish what kinds of thoughts are interfering with your sleep.

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<th>thought</th>
<th>never (0)</th>
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Total score (add items 1 to 25 giving a maximum score of 75) -

Types of thought are highlighted by scoring the three sub-scales — though note that sub-scales 1 & 2 each contain 9 items, while sub-scale 3 only contains 7 items.

Sub-scale 1: focus on rehearsing planning/problem solving (add 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21 & 23)
Sub-scale 2: focus on sleep & wakefulness (add 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 18, 22, 24 & 25)
Sub-scale 3: focus on self & sensory awareness (add 2, 4, 10, 13, 16, 17 & 20)
Test Out Thoughts

Remember that at Session 2 we discussed how you should evaluate thoughts and replace them with more accurate thoughts?

Make sure you apply this to your sleep-related thoughts.
Example of Thought Evaluation

Thoughts about sleep

How this makes me feel

A more accurate thought would be

How the new thought makes me feel

I am awake half of the night, everyone else is sleeping

Anxious, annoyed, jealous

I slept for 6 hours and was awake for 2 hours which was 75%, not 50%. Other people have sleep problems too

Reassured, optimistic, less angry

I'm never going to get to sleep

Out of control I always get some sleep and will get to sleep, the average in my diary was 6 hours

More in control, able to focus

Interrupting Thoughts
Thought Blocking

- More helpful for trivial thoughts than worrying ones.
- It works by stopping other thoughts getting in.

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<th>Step</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
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<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Repeat the word ‘the’ every 2 seconds in your head with your eyes closed</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Don’t say it out loud, but you can mouth it</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Keep up the repetitions for about 5 minutes</td>
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Using Imagery
Using Imagery

• Evidence tells us that in order to be effective, imagery should be planned in advance and well practiced (not thought up in the moment).

• Your calming and soothing imagery sequence should take about 10 minutes to go through in your mind’s eye.

• You should practice this several times a day.

• Notice the colours, smells, sounds and sensations that are part of your scene – make the image as vivid and clear as possible.
Sleep Scheduling

• Remember in the last session we discussed the really important technique of sleep scheduling?
• Getting out of bed when you can’t sleep reduces thinking time in bed, going to bed when you are sleepy tired means you will be more likely to fall asleep than lie awake thinking.
• Applying sleep scheduling is crucial.
Quick Break
Putting The Day To Rest

- Aim is to put the day to bed along with plans for the next day long before bedtime so that when bedtime comes you can get to sleep.

1) Set aside 20 minutes every evening (same time daily).
2) Sit somewhere where you won’t be disturbed.
3) Use your sleep diary, notebook and pen.
4) Think of what has happened during the day and how you feel about the kind of day it was.
Putting The Day To Rest

5) Write down some main points (put them to rest by committing to paper), talk about good things as well as troubles.
6) Write a to-do list for any loose ends.
7) Think about tomorrow, what you are looking forward to and things that may cause you worry.
Putting The Day To Rest

8) Write down your schedule in a diary.
9) Write down anything you are unsure about and make a note of a time in the morning when you will find out about that.
10) Use your 20 minutes to make you feel more in control. Close the book on the day.
11) When bedtime comes, remind yourself you have already dealt with the day and tomorrow if they come to mind.
12) If new thoughts arise, note them down on paper to be dealt with in the morning.
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Abandoning Effort to Sleep

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Give Up Trying To Sleep

• Remember in the first session we discussed how attention, intention and effort cause insomnia?
• Trying to fall asleep keeps you wakeful and leads to irritability when you don’t succeed. The harder you try, the less likely it is.
• Turn the tables on your insomnia:
  – Relish opportunities to get out of bed and use the time to do something relaxing that you enjoy, imagine catastrophes that will happen if you can’t sleep and see them as ridiculous and absurd, accept that you have insomnia.
Give Up Trying To Sleep

• Give up any concerns about what will happen if you stay awake.

• When your eyelids want to close, say to yourself that you just want to stay awake for another couple of minutes. Don’t purposefully force yourself to stay awake, but shift the focus off attempting to fall asleep.
Example of Thought Evaluation

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Abandoning Clock Watching
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‘When I wake up and look at the clock, I can’t believe it’s only 1am’. People with insomnia use clocks as performance indicators.
Abandoning Clock Watching

Solution 1
Turn your clock away and put it out of reach

Solution 2
Remove your clock from the room

Solution 3
Challenge the negative thought and self-evaluation

Disappointment and Anxiety

Look at that, it’s only 1am

I should be well asleep by now

I have failed

Supporting Health and Wellbeing
Session 4

Homework

- Sleep diary and thought record.
- Sleep scheduling and challenging sleep thoughts.
- Sleep hygiene, bedtime wind-down and relaxation.
- Application of testing out thoughts, thought blocking, putting the day to rest, using imagery, abandoning clock-watching.

What’s Coming Next Session?
- Dealing with nightmares and reviewing goals.
Thought For The Week Ahead

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET
GOOD NIGHT