**Sleep Hygiene Rules**

This handout contains basic principles for keeping sleep clean and refreshing. Most people will find themselves violating some of these principles – but if you experience any sleep problems, get these principles in line. Most of these sleep hygiene principles are based on the following idea: The part of our brain that regulates sleep is not a part we can directly give directions to. For this part of the brain to understand when the sleep and when to be awake, we need to be very clear in the indirect messages we give it. The four most important ways our brain know whether to sleep or be awake have to do with light, schedule, the environmental cue of our bed, and activity. The principles below are not just important for getting enough hours of sleep, but also getting enough quality deep sleep.

Note that with normal sleep, it will take 15-30 minutes to fall asleep and you will have several times in the night where you fully or partially wake up briefly.

Light tells the brain to be awake.

1. Stay away from all electronic screens last hour before bed
2. Keep the bedroom as dark as possible (i.e., shades)
3. Start darkening the home some the last hour before bed
4. Make sure to get plenty of light during the day

Schedule

1. Get to bed at the same time every night (within +/- 15 minutes of a set time)
2. Get up at the same time every morning, even if did not sleep well
3. No napping

Environmental cue – the brain needs to associate the bed/bedding with sleeping

1. The bed should only be for sleeping (and one other thing adult couples do)
2. The bed should not be used for video-games, long conversations, and certainly not for eating

Activity

1. Make sure to get plenty of physical activity during the day, but not last hour before bed
2. Reduce activity before bed-time – avoid activating or stressful activities or topics last hour
3. No eating before or in bed (except as needed with medications)

Substances

1. No caffeine after 2:00pm. Even if you are able to fall asleep, it interferes with the depth of sleep
2. No alcohol in the last couple of hours before bed – it produces sleep that is not restful
3. Sleep medications are most useful for helping to reset a bad sleep pattern and are usually meant to help the person fall asleep, not stay asleep. Make sure to get in bed immediately after taking a sleeping medication

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