

## TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP

Some individuals suffer with sleep problems after exposure to a traumatic event, or the loss of love one. They may be unable to fall asleep, unable to remain asleep, wake in the early morning hours and are then unable to go back to sleep. Problems with sleep are actually one of the most common complaints we hear from disaster survivors and victim's family members. In addition to trauma focused treatments that generally include 10-12 sessions of evidence based work such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Exposure Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing and Narrative Therapy as examples, try some of these tips (or as many as you need together).

Some tips for helping with sleep problems include:

1. Only go to bed when you are ready to go to sleep. Don't read, watch TV or engage in other activities when you are trying to tire yourself enough to sleep.
2. Engage in breathing retraining as you settle into bed. Use a benign word like "calm" or "relax" as you breathe in and out to lower your heart rate and blood pressure. Use imagery of a peaceful place and try to quiet your mind.
3. Use soothing music or music that is timed to the breath to relax you. Try relaxation or meditation tapes (Mp3's) that help with cognitive messages that assist in going to sleep. You may even want to create your own playlist that you can practice using and have as your 'sleep music.' Just don't ever play it while driving.
4. Use sleep balms with relaxing aromas such as lavender that help induce sleep. Try massage oils or balms on your feet, hands, calves and temples to induce sleep.
5. Try a relaxing tea an hour before sleep, such as Chamomile or Lavender.
6. Avoid eating (especially sugar) or drinking (especially alcohol) at least one hour before retiring and avoid exercise right before bed as well.
7. Ask your physician if you might use a vitamin such as Valerian or another medication to assist in sleep.
8. Try the autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) a feeling of euphoric tingling and relaxation that can come over someone when he or she watches certain videos or hears certain sounds.<https://www.sleep.org/articles/what-is-asmr/>

If exposed to trauma material, some people even suffer with nightmares and flashbacks during or after the event. These will likely decrease over time as you process your experience and have opportunities to talk to your social supports, family members, friends or coach.

See your physician or therapist to engage in treatment or develop some cognitive tools, or as mentioned earlier, trauma based treatment interventions if sleep disturbances persist.

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