

## Stimulus Control

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One of the reasons you have a hard time falling asleep and/or staying asleep is that your body has learned to spend a lot of time in bed not sleeping. So now your body becomes anxious or tense when you get in bed, which is not going to help you sleep! So the goal of Stimulus Control is to retrain your body and your brain that when you get into bed you should fall asleep. The primary rule of Stimulus Control is, **The bed is for sleep, and sleep is for the bed.** The following provides guidance on how to follow this rule and use Stimulus Control to help you sleep.

1. **Use your bed only for sleep.** You should try to avoid other activities, such as reading, watching TV, text messaging, using Facebook, surfing the Internet, talking on the phone, or doing homework, because then your brain doesn't learn that the bed is for sleep.
2. **Sleep should only occur in bed.** Try to avoid sleeping on the couch or in other places, because this can also get in the way of your brain making the connection between your bed and sleep.
3. **Keep a regular bedtime and wake-up time.** The more regular your schedule, the easier it will be for you to fall asleep. Keep your bedtime and wake time on weekends within 1 hour of what it is during the week. Also, avoid sleeping during the day while you are working on this.

My bedtime will be \_\_\_\_\_.

My wake-up time will be \_\_\_\_\_.

4. **Go to bed only when you are sleepy.** This is tough! It sometimes requires a balance of waiting until you are sleepy but also trying to stick with your regular schedule. If at first the time you can actually fall asleep is much later than the time you would like to fall asleep, go to bed at a time you can actually fall asleep within 15 to 30 minutes (this may be later than your regular bedtime). Once this is happening, move your bedtime 15 minutes earlier every few days. It is okay if you are sleepier than usual at first. This sleepiness will help to reset your schedule.
5. **When you are trying to sleep, if you are not asleep in 15 to 20 minutes, you should get out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy before getting back into bed.** This is the MOST IMPORTANT part of the process. It will keep you from spending too much time in bed tossing and turning instead of sleeping.
  - Don't watch the clock. Just guess when 15 to 20 minutes have passed. Usually, this is the point where you start to worry that you will not fall asleep, or during the night, it is the point when you start counting how many hours you have left until your alarm goes off.
  - For the first 2 to 3 weeks, you may be getting up quite a bit while your brain is retraining.
  - Plan ahead of time what you are going to do during the time you are out of bed. What could you do during that time?

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*Following the rules of Stimulus Control is really hard and takes a lot of motivation and discipline to be successful. At first, you will feel as if your sleep is getting a little bit worse and not better. But remember, we are retraining your body to relearn healthy sleeping patterns, and just like any new skill, it takes practice to get really good at it. So if you are consistent and follow this plan every night, you will soon find yourself falling asleep faster and staying asleep through the night.*

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