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封面故事

在綿羊的幫助下，牠終於闔上了眼睛，快進入夢鄉了。偏偏在這個時候，滿腦子的憂慮把牠拉回現實，跌入不斷嘗試入睡與失眠的循環。為了睡個好覺，牠正在尋找如何改善睡眠習慣的要訣... ...

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Public Mental Health Laboratory
公共心理健康研究室

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VOL. 06

"Bed" You Didn't Know I Spend 1/3 of My Life with You...

Do you know the importance of sleep? Do you have some bad sleeping habits?

Sleep and mental health are closely intertwined. They affect each other significantly, and many individuals with emotional issues also experience sleep disturbances.

Lorem ipsum

FAQs about Sleeping

QUESTION

What's the sleep situation like for people in Hong Kong?

Local surveys suggest that around **2 million people**[1] in Hong Kong struggle with various levels of insomnia. On average, people there get about 6.5 hours of sleep a night, and **half the population sleeps less than 7 hours**.

QUESTION

If I don't have insomnia, why should I bother checking my sleep habits?

Cultivating good sleep habits can greatly enhance your sleep quality. This leads to better mood, more energy, and improved physical well-being, all of which help you tackle daily challenges more effectively.

Quality sleep can:

1. Improve cognitive functions
2. Boost the immune system
3. Replenish mental energy
4. Consolidate and process memories

QUESTION

Does more sleep always mean better quality sleep?

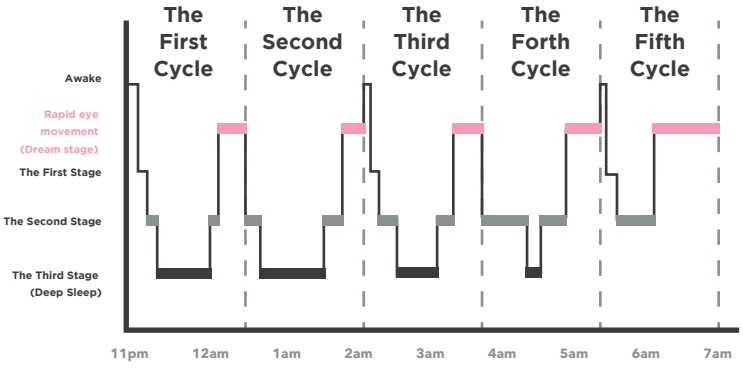
Sleep happens in cycles, each lasting about 1.5 hours. We cycle through deep sleep and then back to a stage similar to wakefulness, known as REM sleep or the dreaming phase, roughly five times a night. If you get enough deep sleep, you'll feel well-rested.

Deep sleep lasts the longest during the initial cycle and decreases as the night progresses. **Just because you sleep more doesn't necessarily mean you're getting the deep restorative sleep your body needs**. In fact, oversleeping can sometimes leave you feeling even more exhausted.

Sleep Pattern

Distribution of sleep stages:

Wake from sleep: 5%
Stage one (light sleep): 2%-5%
Stage two (light sleep): 45%-55%
Stage three (deep sleep): 15%-25%
Rapid eye movement (dream stage): 20%-25%



QUESTION

How does light affect sleep?

Our brain is sensitive to changes in light. In the morning, our **cortisol (stress hormone)** levels increase, activating our wakefulness system to prepare us for the challenges of the day. In the evening, cortisol secretion decreases, and the brain releases **melatonin (sleep hormone)**, inducing drowsiness and facilitating sleep. Our sleep-wake cycle is influenced by light, and it helps regulate our daily patterns of wakefulness and rest, known as the **"circadian rhythm."**

Sleeping in a bright environment or exposure to electronic screens before bedtime can **disrupt the brain's secretion of melatonin or cortisol**, affecting the sleep-wake system and potentially leading to sleep problems.

QUESTION

Should I make up for my lack of sleep by taking naps on the next day?

We should **avoid catching up on sleeping hours** as it is not helpful. For instance, if you fell asleep 2 hours later than usual last night, you should feel drowsy earlier, and it would be easier for you to fall asleep at night. If you are really tired, the maximum nap time you give yourself should only be 20 minutes. Otherwise, **napping can interfere with the sleep mechanism and delay your circadian rhythm**.

Our sleep wake cycle regulation will be affected by our biological clock, when it is interfered with, our sleeping system will lose its balance.

QUESTION

Despite my attempts to go to bed earlier and stay in bed, I'm still unable to fall asleep. Am I approaching this the wrong way?

If you've spent many nights in bed feeling anxious and unable to sleep, it's quite possible that **your brain has started associating your bed and bedroom with that anxious restlessness**. To break this association, we need to strengthen the connection in our minds between "bed - bedroom - time to sleep." You should head to bed only when you're actually feeling sleepy. If you find yourself unable to sleep for more than 20 minutes, it's best to leave the bedroom and only return when you're feeling sleepy again.

▼▼▼ ANSWERS

1. Avoid substances that are stimulating, such as caffeine and nicotine in the afternoon; 2. Avoid drinking before going to bed, as it would break the sleep structure and lead to difficulties in falling asleep; 3. Avoid going to bed feeling too hungry or eating too much, it can prevent excessive acid secretion and reflux to the esophagus and cause discomfort; 4.Avoid over exercising before going to bed, while sufficient exercise is helpful to falling asleep; 5. The sleeping environment should be quiet, dark, in moderate temperature, well ventilated and with comfortable beddings; 6. Avoid having items that show time and electronic devices to reduce the stress and affection on light7.No matter if you slept well the other day, you should wake up at a fixed time in order to establish a fixed resting schedule.

Sleeping Habits

Having good sleep quality offers numerous benefits for our bodies, even if you don't have insomnia. To improve your sleep quality, it's crucial to maintain healthy sleep habits. Take a close look at the diagram below and identify any poor sleep habits it represents.

Do I have insomnia?

Insomnia, as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)[2], is characterized by the following symptoms. Let's see if you are experiencing any insomnia-related issues:

- ◯ Clearly affected by the sleeping quality and affected daily life
- ◯ Difficulty in getting off to sleep and the maintenance of sleep and unsatisfactory sleep quality
- ◯ Sleeping problems occur at least 3 nights per week
- ◯ Even with enough sleeping opportunities, you still face difficulty falling asleep (i.e. not working night shifts or taking care of family member overnight etc)

If you have three checkmarks (✓) and the problem persists from a few days up to three months, it's considered short-term insomnia.

If you have three checkmarks (✓) and the issue lasts for three months or more, then it would be classified as long-term or chronic insomnia.

Short-term insomnia is quite common and many of us have experienced it at some point. It is usually triggered by various changes in our lives, such as:

- ▶ Stress or significant life changes/events.
- ▶ The sleep environment, where noise and bright lights can affect the secretion of melatonin.
- ▶ Sleeping in an unfamiliar bed or environment, like a hotel, where the bedding is uncomfortable, or you can't find a comfortable sleeping position.
- ▶ Physical discomfort or pain.
- ▶ The effects of certain medications.
- ▶ Jet lag.

Long-term or chronic insomnia is a potential comorbidity of other mental disorders or physical conditions, such as:

- ▶ Mental health problems like anxiety or depression.
- ▶ Physical conditions such as heart disease, chronic pain, respiratory issues, or sleep apnea, which can lower the quality of sleep.
- ▶ Medication side effects, such as those from some antidepressants, which may include insomnia, interrupted sleep, or excessive sleepiness. Sleep problems may also arise after stopping medication.
- ▶ Lifestyle factors, such as long-term shift work or a sleep-wake cycle that is inconsistent.

Effects on Physical and Mental Health from Suffering Chronic Insomnia[3]

1 Lack of sleep or poor sleep quality can affect your mood, mental state, and ability to handle daily tasks, increasing stress and the potential for psychological health issues such as depression and anxiety.

2 Physical exhaustion can lead to a lack of motivation, decreased desire for social interaction, and over time, a reluctance to engage socially. Social isolation can result in mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety.

3 Mental fatigue can reduce cognitive abilities, immunity, concentration, and memory, making it difficult to manage anxiety, leading to negative thoughts and impacting mental health.

4 Chronic insomnia can increase the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and obesity.

What if I have insomnia? What are the solutions?

1 **First, review your sleep and lifestyle habits. Poor sleep habits can interfere with sleep. Maintaining good sleep habits is the first step in addressing sleep problems.**

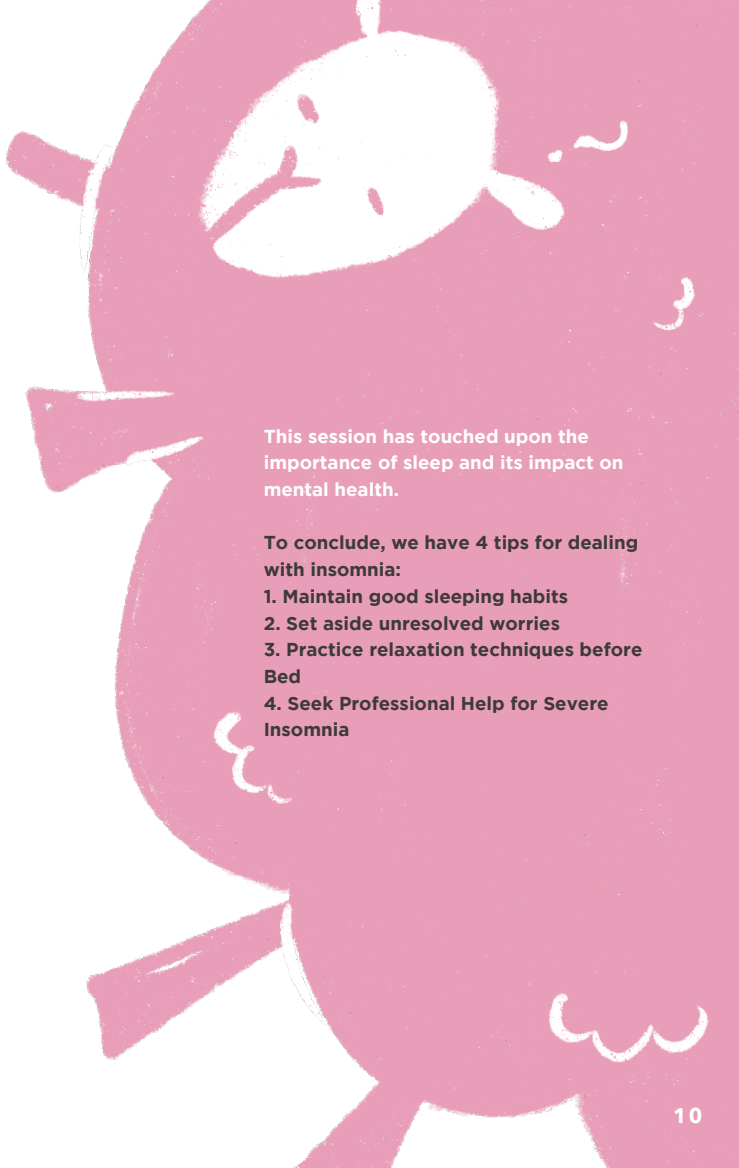
2 **Constantly having too many unresolved worries can affect your peace of mind.**

- **Create a to-do list: Research has found that people who write down their tasks in a to-do list before bed fall asleep faster than those who just try to remember them.**
- **Set aside worry time: Limit your worrying to a short period, allowing you to let go of your concerns before bedtime.**

3 **High stress can keep the arousal system active, suppressing the sleep system.**

- **Try the relaxation exercises mentioned in VOL.03 before bed: abdominal breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.**
- **Relaxation techniques take time to master, but with persistence, you will gradually see their benefits.**

If insomnia is severe, or persists for three months or more, seek help from a professional such as a doctor or clinical psychologist. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) is a scientifically validated effective treatment for insomnia and is often the first line of treatment for chronic insomnia, followed by medication if necessary.



This session has touched upon the importance of sleep and its impact on mental health.

To conclude, we have 4 tips for dealing with insomnia:
1. Maintain good sleeping habits
2. Set aside unresolved worries
3. Practice relaxation techniques before Bed
4. Seek Professional Help for Severe Insomnia