

# **I-CAN SLEEP: Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy for Individuals with Insomnia and CANcer**

## **Chapter 6**

In this chapter you will:

- ◆ Learn how to use problem solving to cope with sleep disturbances
- ◆ Learn how to maintain treatment gains
- ◆ Learn how to motivate yourself to continue working towards better sleep
- ◆ Learn how to cope with relapse

Goals for the chapter:

- 1) Develop a plan for dealing with relapses when they occur

## PROBLEM SOLVING FOR INSOMNIA

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### The Five-Step Problem Solving Technique

The following is a brief summary of the five-step problem solving technique (S.O.L.V.E.) developed by psychologists Thomas D'Zuriella and Marvin Goldfried. This technique has been used with many different problems so you may be familiar with it already. In this section, the technique will be applied specifically to sleep problems.

A "problem" is defined as a failure to find an effective response. In other words, it is not the situation, but what you make of it, that determines whether a problem exists. For example, your car not starting one morning when you have to get to work is not necessarily a problem. A problem emerges when you cannot find an alternative way of getting to work on time. A problem can also occur if you employ a response that ends up making the situation worse. For example, trying to fix the car yourself may make the car worse in addition to wasting time and causing you to be late for work.

The S.O.L.V.E. technique stands for:

- S**tate your problem
- O**utline your response
- L**ist your alternatives
- V**iew the consequences
- E**valuate your results

### Step-by-Step Instructions

For this technique, you will need some paper and a pen. You can use the problem solving work sheet in Table 6.1.

**Step 1:** State your problem - Write out your problem on paper. Make sure you phrase it in a way that conforms with the definition of a problem as a failure to find an effective response.

- e.g. Doug has a problem with daytime napping
- Doug's *incorrect* statement of problem: "I can't help but nap in the afternoon and this interferes with my sleep at night."
- Doug's *correct* statement of the problem: "I haven't found the best way to curb my napping habit".

**Step 2:** Outline your response - Describe your usual response to the problem (that is, what you do or don't do). You can use the following outline to define your response in more detail. Be sure to include the persons and events that are usually involved.

**Example: Doug's Daytime Napping**

Who is involved? (the other people)	Doug: <i>"I'm the only one involved"</i>
What happens? (what is done or not done that bothers you)	<i>I take a nap when I know I shouldn't</i>
When it happens? (time of day, how often, how long it lasts)	<i>Mid-afternoon every day of the week for about 1-1/2 hours</i>
Where it happens? (location)	<i>I nap in my bed</i>
How it happens? (sequence of events, your mood at the time)	<i>After lunch, I start to feel tired because I didn't sleep well the night before. Eventually I lie down and fall asleep</i>
Why it happens? (the reasons you or others give for the problem)	<i>I need to sleep. I need to catch up the sleep I lost the previous night. If I don't nap, I'll feel terrible.</i>

**Step 3:** List alternative solutions to the problem. Do some "brainstorming" and generate a list of alternative strategies or approaches to your problem. Brainstorming means thinking of anything, no matter how crazy or unbelievable it sounds, that could be a possible solution to your problem. A few guidelines for brainstorming are:

- ◆ Don't be critical of any idea at first. Just write it down. Later, you can sort out ideas that are practical and those that are not.
- ◆ The crazier the better. Don't be constrained by normal logic. Open your mind to new things.
- ◆ *The more ideas, the better.* In this case, quantity is better than quality, at least at first. The more ideas you have to start with, the greater your chances of finding one or two good ones. Therefore, make a long list--a minimum of ten ideas is suggested.
- ◆ *Worry about the details later.* The mechanics of how each idea is

supposed to work are not important. Don't waste time with details until you have narrowed your list down.

Back to our napping example. Remember that we defined this problem as Doug's inability to find effective ways of coping with the sleepiness that occurs in the daytime. From the outline of Doug's usual response to this problem we see that his naps usually occur in the mid-afternoon and he naps in bed. His interpretation of why it happens is that he feels sleepy and can't resist lying down.

We now want to generate a list of alternative strategies to taking a nap in the afternoon.

### **Doug's Brainstorming for Alternatives to Napping**

1. Go lawn bowling instead of napping
2. Get wife or roommate to throw cold water in face to stay awake
3. Drink a pot of coffee or a case of Coke
4. Plan on doing housework in mid-afternoon
5. Get a volunteer job that starts at 2:00 p.m. and goes to 5:00 p.m. every day
6. Make your nap time your 'worrying time' instead. Spend this time period focusing exclusively on your most distressing personal problem. Problem solve for solutions or ways of managing the problem
7. Arrange to meet a friend every afternoon to go for a walk
8. Replace your bed with a sofa bed that has a time lock that keeps closed all day
9. Put a sign on your front door that says "Solicitors welcome, especially in the afternoon"
10. Move next to the airport and leave your windows open all day
11. Have a friend call every day in the afternoon to talk about sports and politics
12. Wear a rubber band on your wrist. Every time you start to feel sleepy and get the urge to nap, snap the rubber band and yell the word "STOP!" to yourself.

**Step 4:** View the consequences. Now, go over the list of alternatives and pick out the ones that seem the most promising or appealing. You'll notice that the list contains some ideas that seem outrageous or impractical. On the other hand, they would be solutions to the problem--having water thrown in your face would keep you from taking a nap! Besides, some outrageous ideas contain elements of practicality. Take the water throwing example. Although using water is outrageous, the idea of involving a parent or friend to help you is not. This one outrageous alternative helped generate a few more alternatives that solicit the support of others in coping with this problem (#6 and 7). Put a line through all the ideas that are too unrealistic. Look at the remaining ideas. If you wish, you can combine one or more strategies based on common elements. For example, what #4, 5, 6, and 7 all share is the idea that Doug should plan a regular activity every day in the afternoon when he normally takes a nap. Since it might be impractical or tedious to do the same activity every afternoon, he should construct a weekly schedule with a variety of different activities planned for afternoons.

After combining ideas, you should be down to two or three possibilities. Now you have to think about the consequences of putting each idea into action. In other words, you should consider the pros and cons of each idea. Things to consider are: (1) how it would make you feel (relieved? more anxious?); (2) what personal needs would be satisfied by making the change?; (3) how would it affect those around you (spouse, children, friends, etc.); (4) how easy would it be to make the change long-term?.

Write out the pros and cons for each strategy. Decide how much importance you would assign each pro and con. When deciding which strategy to use, you should take into consideration not only the total number of pros and cons for each, but how important they are. Ultimately, you should choose the strategy whose pros outweigh the cons either in number or in importance.

**Step 5:** Evaluate the results. Now it is time to act on your choice(s). Put your plan into place and observe the consequences. Were they what you were expecting? Any surprises? Are you satisfied with the outcome? If not, you go to the next option on your list of alternative strategies. One great thing about this method is that you don't have to limit yourself to just one strategy. Using the S.O.L.V.E. process, you are able to systematically and logically generate a list of strategies to manage your problem.

Some people criticize this method, arguing that they just end up dealing with their problem in the "same old way" or that they use the first strategy they come up with. Is it a I-CAN SLEEP: Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy for individuals with Insomnia and CANcer Page 5

waste of time then? The thing to ask yourself is how confident do you feel with the decision you made? How confident do you think you would have felt with that decision if you had not gone through the problem-solving method and assessed the pros and cons of every alternative?

Making a decision that you don't feel confident with can sometimes create more anxiety than the original problem, especially if you feel that you are making a hasty decision and missing some other possible strategy. By using the S.O.L.V.E. method, you should feel more confident with your decision because you know that you used a proven technique to arrive at the best possible choice given your alternatives.

Another advantage to this method is that you can do your problem-solving on paper rather than in your head. By always thinking about your problem, it is difficult to get any distance from it and look at it objectively. Problems tend to look a little more manageable when they are written out on paper. Therefore, do your thinking on paper and not in your head. This way you have a written record of your thinking. When worrying, people tend to ruminate, going over and over problems, sometimes thinking of a possible solution but then dismissing it. By doing problem-solving on paper, you can review your records and see what ideas you have considered and what ideas you have not.

**Table 6.1**  
**Problem Solving Work Sheet**

<b>State your problem:</b> a. Background Info: b. Detailed problem statement:			
<b>Outline your typical response</b>	Where I do it? When I do it? How I do it? How I feel What I want (goal for solving problem)		
<b>List your alternatives (brainstorming)</b>	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.		
<b>View the consequences (assess the pros and cons of each alternative)</b>	Pros 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.	Cons	Potential Effectiveness (1=least; 5 = Most)
<b>Evaluate the results</b> How confident do you feel with your decision? (1 = not at all confident ; 5 = very confident)			

## WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE? MAINTAINING TREATMENT GOALS

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You should be proud of yourself for getting this far! This is not an easy program. It can be hard to change old habits. Our job was relatively easy--you did all the work. All we did was show you how to regulate your pattern of sleep and engage in more appropriate sleep behaviour and thinking about sleep. You are the one who put these skills into practice and learned how to take control of your sleep.

The program doesn't end here, however. Unlike many traditional medical treatments where you take a medication for fixed period of time and then stop, you should continue with the skills you have learned in this program. It is important that you apply the skills and techniques on a regular basis to help you maintain a regular and satisfying sleep pattern. Think of it as an overall lifestyle change similar to maintaining a healthy diet. All we did was show you how to sleep the way most good sleepers do. Thus, if you want to continue sleeping better than you did before, you should continue to apply the skills from this program.

If you have not achieved the goals you set out at the beginning of this program, you should retrace your steps and see which procedures you used and which you didn't. If you didn't use all the techniques, especially the stimulus control guidelines, then you should consider going back and giving them a try. You won't know if they work unless you try them. Also remember that not everyone responds to the techniques at the same rate, so give it time.

If you skip on your regular practice of these strategies and your sleep quality is still unsatisfactory, you should justify to yourself why you chose not to do the work. Make sure you give yourself a good reason because ultimately you are in charge in your own self-management program. A common reason people give to themselves for not using a new skill is that it is too hard for them to change their present habits, or they are too busy with other activities to put the skill in to practice. If this is your reason, then ask yourself:

How important is quality sleep to me?

How much longer can I go the ways things are going now?

Are these other activities more important than my sleep quality? If yes, then devote your attention to those activities until you achieve the goal associated with them. If no, then ask yourself: why are these activities taking priority? What needs are being served by devoting your energy to those activities?



Ultimately, you are responsible for your continued success. You now have the skills to make your sleep better, so you should not feel like the passive victim of your sleep problem.

### Motivating Yourself to Continue

Success in terms of sleeping better will probably be the best motivation you can find for continuing. However, you should not become consumed with the outcome of your efforts all the time. You can enhance your motivation by recognizing the rewards in just doing the techniques. Imagery, for example, should be a pleasurable experience regardless of whether you get to sleep any quicker. Look at it this way, even if it takes you the same amount of time to fall asleep, at least that time was spent engaged in pleasant imagery and relaxation, as opposed to frustration and anxiety.

If you ever start to doubt why you are doing these techniques, just remind yourself of your original goals for sleeping better. Ask yourself, "do I want to go back to sleeping the way I did?" It might also help to remind yourself of the successes you *did* have with this program. Success with one technique is a good sign that you will have success with others. Above all, compare your successes and failures to your personal (realistic) goals and not to some other standard for sleeping.

It may help to self-monitor your sleep periodically to remind yourself of how well you are sleeping. For example, every 6 months you could fill out the sleep diary for a 2-3 week period and then chart your progress. Use this as an opportunity to identify areas of drift in your sleep pattern that may have occurred since finishing the program. For example, are you still maintaining a regular rising time? Do you restrict your time in bed to no more than one hour greater than the total time you are sleeping?

### Coping with Relapses

It is important to first be able to recognize when you are having a relapse. One or two nights of poor sleep is not a relapse since most people have occasional nights of insomnia. Of course, you are the best judge of whether you are falling into a pattern of chronic insomnia again. You can use, as your assessment guideline, the sleep you had before starting the program. Therefore, if you start to have this poor sleep pattern again for at least 2 weeks, then you should take some steps to correct it.

You should make sure that any relapse in your sleep pattern is not related to a new stressor in your life or change in your health or lifestyle status. Some things to look for are:

Is there a new personal or financial stressor in your life now? (e.g., change in income, marriage/divorce/separation in the family, loss of a loved one, moving or change in living arrangements)

Have you been feeling more depressed or anxious than usual?

Are you taking any new medications?

Are you drinking more than usual?

Are you smoking too much?

Are you having any new physical symptoms that would cause a change in your health status?

Disturbed sleep can be a symptom of any of the above, so you should rule them out as possible causes before proceeding with your relapse plan. To be on the safe side, report any sudden and dramatic change in your sleep to your physician. If it is related to a change in your health, you can still use your relapse plan to make your sleep better, just ensure that the primary problem is also being treated.

The first thing to remember with a relapse is not to panic. Relapses are normal and expected. Don't let yourself become overwhelmed with negative self-defeating thoughts. On the other hand, you shouldn't ignore a relapse and hope that it goes away. If anything, a relapse is just a reminder that your condition requires ongoing management.

One of the best ways to cope with a relapse is to have a plan prepared beforehand. The plan will be personal and depend on your preferences concerning techniques and coping strategies. You can make your work easier by knowing beforehand what your strengths and weaknesses are (e.g., coping with negative thoughts, using imagery). If your relapse is related to one of these weaknesses, then the first step may be to go back and read the relevant chapter. You don't have to read the whole manual again, just the chapters relevant to your relapse.

Make a list that will be your relapse plan. You can include any skill or set of skills from the manual. Put them in order of priority and expected effectiveness. An example of a plan for coping with a relapse is provided below. As a suggestion, the first three in this list should also be in your relapse plan, preferably at the top as well.

1. Follow all the stimulus control guidelines to the letter, not just the ones that worked for you.
2. Make sure your time in bed never exceeds your total time sleeping by more than one hour. Self-monitor using the sleep diary to monitor this.
3. Read Chapter 5 and complete the Attitudes and Beliefs about Sleep Scale again to remind yourself of the dangers of negative self-talk about sleep.
4. Don't cut back on daytime activities, especially pleasurable activities (unless you are quite drowsy, in which case you should probably avoid driving or operating heavy equipment).
5. To avoid napping during the day, try to keep busy with mentally challenging activities; avoid boring or mentally passive activities such as watching TV.
6. Try to be more physically active during the day to increase your deep sleep at night.
7. Use positive reaffirming self-talk:  
"Insomnia will go away"  
"I coped with it before, I can cope with it again"  
"I have the skills now to help me get through this"
8. Tell your spouse/friends about your condition and how you plan to resolve the problem. Ask for their support and understanding.

Above all else, the accomplishments that you have made so far deserve recognition. The skills you have learned are available for your use at any time. Take pride in your success!