"I often have trouble sleeping. What can I do?"

Here are 20 tips that may help you.

1. **Keep a regular bedtime routine for better sleep.**
   Maintain a consistent sleep schedule.

2. **Develop a soothing ritual.**
   Take a bath or play soft music to help you wind down. Incorporate relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or prayer into your daily routine.

3. **Noise and light a problem?**
   Try earplugs, a white-noise machine or separate bedrooms. Room darkening shades or a sleep mask work well to block out the light.

4. **Make your bedroom your haven**.
   Use your bedroom for only sleep. Don't watch TV, use your computer, or read when you get into bed. Be sure to keep the temperature comfortable and the clock out of sight!

5. **Go to bed earlier or later.**
   Experiment with your biological clock. Adjust your bedtime to when you feel like going to bed. Sleep when you're tired.

6. **De-clutter your mind.**
   Keep a journal and write down any thoughts you may have before going to bed. Keep your journal by your bedside. If you wake up worrying about something, write down your thoughts and clear your head.

7. **Avoid big meals or spicy foods just before bed.**
   Large or spicy meals can lead to indigestion or discomfort. Try to eat a modest-size dinner at least three hours before bed.

8. **Don't take naps after 3 p.m.**
   Limit your napping to earlier in the day and for no more than 20 minutes.

9. **Exercise is great, but not too late in the day.**
   Try to exercise at least 30 minutes on most days, but not later than 2-3 hours before your bedtime.

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10. **Stay away from caffeine and nicotine.**
Coffee, colas and certain teas contain caffeine, a stimulant that can take up to eight hours to wear off. Nicotine is also a stimulant.

11. **Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.**
Alcohol can interrupt your deep sleep pattern and may also contribute to impairment of breathing.

12. **Satisfy your hunger prior to bed.**
Have a light snack such as crackers, cereal and milk, or yogurt or warm milk.

13. **Minimize liquid intake before sleep.**
Limit what you drink an hour and half before bedtime.

14. **Expose yourself to sunlight.**
Bright sunlight increases melatonin which regulates your sleep-wake cycles. Try to get at least two hours of sunlight a day.

15. **Unwind.**
Play cards or a board game to help you unwind. Grab your favorite book and settle in, but don't read in bed.

16. **Relax.**
Enjoy a calming bubble bath, soak your feet in a warm pot of water, or take a nice warm shower to relax all of your tense muscles. Listen to light music.

17. **Just "be."**
Develop an evening routine that doesn't demand too much thought or worry. Don't make upsetting phone calls or engage in unpleasant tasks before bed.

18. **Breathe.**
Correct breathing is the most effective, easiest relaxation technique. Place one hand on your abdomen and the other on your chest. As you inhale, focus on pushing out your abdomen so your lower hand moves forward. As you exhale focus on pushing your abdomen in, while keeping your shoulders and chest still. Try to keep the exhale and inhale the same length.

19. **Experiment with lavender.**
Lavender is a calming scent. You may want to invest in some lavender essential oils or even a lotion. Add a few drops to your vaporizer, or add some to a spray bottle with water and sprinkle over your sheets.

20. **Relax through visualization.**
Visualize a calming scene. This method is called guided imagery and is a form of bio-feedback. You may also try a different tactic. Instead of worrying about whether you can get to sleep, shift your thoughts slightly and think about trying to stay up as late as you think you can. This is called paradoxical intention—mind over matter.

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