

Dysfunctional Belief Challenge Scripts Packet

I am going to talk to you about some common trends of maladaptive thoughts and beliefs that we notice among those people who suffer from sleep problems. These thoughts and beliefs can worsen their sleep problems. I would like to highlight some of those for you by reading them aloud and then providing you some explanations. I am selecting these because you scored high on these.

1. I need 8 hours of sleep to feel refreshed and function well during the day.

#1: There is not one set amount of time of sleep a person needs. It appears to be a range and depending on how tired we are, how long we have been awake, as well as the season determines what amount of sleep our body needs. Sometimes people think they need 8 hours to function but this belief is unhelpful. For example, if your body needs 7 hours then you are setting your expectations to fail. Most of the time, with the treatment we will be suggesting to you, we will be able to determine a range of sleep time your body needs.

2. When I do not get proper amount of sleep on a given night, I need to catch up on the next day by napping or on the next night by sleeping longer.

#2: Sometimes people feel they have to catch up on their sleep the next day if they get a short duration of sleep. They may have the urge to want to nap to “catch up.” The nap may sound like a good idea but it steals from the drive your body needs to sleep the following night. Behavior like this can cause your body to become off-balance and leads to worse sleep.

3. I am concerned that chronic insomnia may have serious consequences for my physical health.

#3: Sometimes people who suffer from sleep problems for a long time worry about their physical well-being. They can even wonder if it could be due to serious underlying problems. However, the good news is that insomnia is similar to other bad habits that we pick up. While it can cause a lot of worrying, it is a very treatable condition that can be uncomfortable but does not shorten our life-span.

4. I am worried that I may lose control over my abilities to sleep.

#4: Some beliefs surrounding sleep involves ideas that you may lose control over your abilities to sleep. In reality, the body has incredible mechanisms to ensure this doesn't happen. Have you ever tried staying awake for 2 days? It's almost impossible and eventually the body will “crash” to make up for sleep deprivation. The body has mechanisms to guard against this. With the procedures we are going to offer you, you will be better able to use the natural drives of your body in a way that best suits your day-to-day schedule.

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5. After a poor night's sleep, I know that it will interfere with my daily activities on the next day.

#5: A common thought that can haunt someone who has sleep problems or trying really hard to fall asleep is that it will interfere with how well they function the following day. They might say this with a lot of certainty as suggested by the strong verbiage such as "I WILL or IT WILL."

In reality, we can have a great amount or quality of sleep but may function poorly the following day. The reverse is also true when we have very poor sleep but have an amazing and exciting day the next day. A great example is a person returning home from a long travel and being up for many hours may still feel great and on top of the world after seeing his family. The two are mutually exclusive and it's impossible to predict the future with certainty. So next time if your mind tries to play this trick on you, try to remember that you can't tell your fortunes or predict the future.

6. In order to be alert and function well during the day, I am better off taking a sleeping pill rather than having a poor night's sleep.

#6 & #15: Given the type of psychological distress that insomnia can bring, often people feel it would be easier to take a pill in order to avoid having a poor night's sleep and for them to be alert and function well during the day. This intuitively makes sense and might even be a good idea for jet-lag or a situational type of insomnia that may last for 1-2 weeks. However, people with your type of sleep dysfunction do best with the type of treatment we will propose to you. Having a longer night of sleep by taking a pill does not guarantee good quality sleep. Neither does it guarantee your level of energy or alertness the following day. It is impossible to predict how we will behave or feel the following day. You might end up having a great day because you get some exciting news. The opposite is also true. Pills can cause people to feel drowsy and can even make you feel tired the next day.

7. When I feel irritable, depressed, or anxious during the day, it is mostly because I did not sleep well the night before.

#7: There is a tendency for a person to think that their sleep problem will cause them to have irritability or poor mood the following day. If they have these symptoms they like to blame it on their perceived poor sleep the night prior. In reality, there are actually hospitals in the United States that actually sleep deprive patients with depression to treat their depression. There is evidence for this practice. Most often, something else is causing the anxiety or depression that leads to both irritable mood as well as poor sleep. With our evaluation today and treatment, we will try to help you achieve your ideal sleep. However, despite that, you may still have days when you'd be anxious, irritable or depressed and these are not necessarily to be blamed on sleep.

8. When I sleep poorly on one night, I know that it will disturb my sleep schedule for the whole week.

#8: A common thought that a person with insomnia has is that a single night of poor sleep will throw off their sleep for the entire week. In reality, the body has mechanisms to make adjustments. These mechanisms however fail, if a person with these worries and good intentions, tries to compensate by napping for example. This napping behavior will indeed affect the entire week. Allowing your body to adjust on own is the best way forward. This involves following the sleep hygiene instructions we are providing you.

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9. Without an adequate night's sleep, I can hardly function the next day.

#9: One thought that tends to be on a lot of people's mind who suffer from insomnia is that "I will not be able to function tomorrow because I can't sleep tonight." They struggle and struggle with this idea making it even harder to fall asleep. In reality, this thought cannot be true. The reason for this is that it is an ABSOLUTE statement about an event in the FUTURE. This by definition makes it a PREDICTION. We all know that even the weather forecasters get it wrong with all their fancy high-tech gadgets. A better way to reframe this thought is to say "I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO FUNCTION" rather than "I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FUNCTION." It is OK to hypothesize but we can't really predict the future. We might have a poor day because of inadequate sleep but we may also have a very good day.

10. I can't ever predict whether I will have a good or poor night's sleep.

#10: People sometime start to become anxious during the day about the night. Sometimes they don't feel they can predict they will have good or poor sleep. In reality, good sleep can be expected if you practice good sleep hygiene. If you can protect your sleep drive by ensuring that you don't take naps or sleep-in and avoid stimulants etc. close to bedtime, you have created the condition that will promote good sleep.

11. I have little ability to manage the negative consequences of disturbed sleep.

#11: We all have nights when our sleep is less than ideal for many reasons. People who are at risk for insomnia have unhealthy thoughts such as "My day is going to be ruined and there is nothing I can do to manage the consequences of disturbed sleep." It's a prediction of helplessness that is not necessarily true and promotes increased anxiety. In reality, we can manage by taking advantage of appropriate use of caffeine, exercise, and doing an act that makes us happy in order to mitigate the effects of a poor night sleep.

12. When I feel tired, have no energy, or just seem not to function well during the day, it is generally because I did not sleep well the night before.

#12: People with insomnia sometimes have difficulty with sleep even if they are getting adequate amount. They feel this way because they might feel tired or fatigued. In their minds, they tend to translate this as a consequence to poor sleep. Poor sleep might cause one to be fatigued a little the next day, but there are equally other alternative explanations for feeling tired. It could be that the person suffers from anxiety, or they use substance such as alcohol or cigarettes. Lack of routine exercise is also responsible for deconditioning and feeling poor and tired. If you feel tired, starting a cardiovascular exercise regimen and gradually building up to minimum 30 minutes, 5x/week can bring about significant relief. It will also help you sleep better.

13. I believe that insomnia is essentially a result of a chemical imbalance.

#13: A lot of people suffering from insomnia wonder or even believe that some type of chemical imbalance is causing their insomnia. This is not true. A lot of chronic sleep problems are related to

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our behaviors and beliefs about sleep. You can look at it as a habit. Some habits are good such as automatically brushing our teeth in the morning. If let's say someone forced you to skip brushing one day, you will have a lot of anxiety. Insomnia could be thought of in a similar way. Except this habit is an unhealthy one--- and WE KNOW IT. This leads to a lot of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that cause us distress. With our proposed treatment, we will be able to reverse and modify these habits to help your behaviors be more balanced.

14. I feel that insomnia is ruining my ability to enjoy life and prevents me from doing what I want.

#14: Insomnia and sleep difficulties can cause people to have very strong and anxiety laden reactions. They sometime think that "Insomnia is ruining my life." They might say "It is preventing me from enjoying my life." Poor sleep is definitely an unwanted part of their lives, but it is a hard case to make to blame one's entire perceived unhappiness on sleep problems. It is possible that they have some underlying anxiety or depression that is causing them to feel that way and bringing about the insomnia. The opposite cannot be really true because we use sleep deprivation as a treatment of depression. A good way to leave these absolutists thinking is to make a list, and asking oneself: "What are the reasons besides my sleep problems that is preventing me from enjoying my life?" It may help clarify the much smaller role (if any), of sleep issues with their life problems. If sleep deprivation was a barrier to excitement and enjoyment, there probably wouldn't be any sleep-deprived college parties.

15. Medication is probably the only solution to sleeplessness.

#6 & #15: Given the type of psychological distress that insomnia can bring, often people feel it would be easier to take a pill in order to avoid having a poor night's sleep and for them to be alert and function well during the day. This intuitively makes sense and might even be a good idea for jet-lag or a situational type of insomnia that may last for 1-2 weeks. However, people with your type of sleep dysfunction do best with the type of treatment we will propose to you. Having a longer night of sleep by taking a pill does not guarantee good quality sleep. Neither does it guarantee your level of energy or alertness the following day. It is impossible to predict how we will behave or feel the following day. You might end up having a great day because you get some exciting news. The opposite is also true. Pills can cause people to feel drowsy and can even make you feel tired the next day.

16. I avoid or cancel obligations (social, family, occupational) after a poor night's sleep.

#16: People with insomnia tend to place a lot of emphasis on their day-to-day sleep. For example, they tend to shift a lot of their plans if they perceive to have a poor night's sleep. A lot of this behavior causes them to miss work or important social or family events. Some of the reasons behind this have to do with some unhealthy thoughts. For example, they think "I am going to be worthless at the family party" or "I won't be able to keep up with my co-workers at work" or "I won't be able to think straight" etc. These are all future predictions. A poor night's sleep MIGHT cause some fatigue etc. but to predict that it will lead to all these other issues in such absolute terms cause more distress than necessary.