

Thinking and Worrying in Bed

One of the most common reasons why people have difficulty falling asleep or going back to sleep once they wake up is a racing mind. Here are some techniques that you may or may not have tried that might be worth considering. Remember it is usually a combination of techniques that work best rather than just one.

1. A Challenging Day: When you know that you have a challenging day coming up the next day, least 2 hours before bed that evening, find a quiet place in the house, take a pen and paper and write down all the key issues that you will need to address the next day. These could be people you need to talk to, issues you will need to address, and things that you are concerned about. Then reflect on possible strategies for dealing with these.

- How have you handled them before?
- What has worked in the past?
- What are you willing to try?
- Are you willing to just let go of whatever it is you are worrying about?

Once you have thought through these issues [regardless of whether you have resolved them or not] finish your thinking and worrying session with an affirmation.

Affirmations are very important and need to be repeated a number of times, often out loud.

An affirmation may sound something like... ***Tomorrow might be a challenging day, but I've handled challenging days before and I've always survived. Regardless of what happens tomorrow I'll handle it...***

You can develop your own affirmation but essentially you are re-enforcing the belief that what ever life throws at you tomorrow you have the skills to handle it! Now when you go to bed while waiting to go to sleep if the thoughts start coming simple say ***Don't even start, I've thought about it today, I'll think about it tomorrow now is the time for sleep.*** Repeat this gently to your self over and over.

If after falling asleep, you wake during the night, repeat this statement. If after 30 minutes you still have not gone back to sleep, get up and if there are any ideas you want to jot down about tomorrow, write them down on the note pad you have placed next to your bed. Once you have finished writing down some additional notes repeat your affirmation... ***Tomorrow might be a challenging day, but I've handled challenging days before and I've always survived. Regardless of what happens tomorrow I'll handle it...*** Once you have caught the wave of sleepiness go back to bed. If the thoughts come back, repeat over and over... ***Don't even start, I've thought about it today, I'll think about it tomorrow now is the time for sleep.***

You may need to repeat this process a couple of times during a bad night. The goal of this strategy is to take control of your thinking process which, when left unchecked, can cause anxiety and insomnia.

2. Thought Switching: This is a simple technique that you can use when you are lying awake worrying during the night. It involves thinking about a pleasant experience, holiday or special place that has positive associations. I often start thinking about walking or swimming. As I do, I start to slip into a relaxed state where dreaming starts. What ever thought switching you do it needs to be relaxing and positive in nature. It is also useful to remind yourself that at some stage during the night you will fall asleep, until then it is OK to drift.

Thinking and Worrying in Bed contd

3. Affirmations: Another thing you can do is develop an affirmation about your sleeping generally. These can be written on a card and repeated a couple of times during the day. Such affirmations might be...

"I'm willing to let go of worrying about not sleeping"

"I'm willing to let go of thinking and worrying in bed",

"I'm willing to trust that gradually I will learn to sleep better on those nights before a big day"

The power of affirmations is that when repeated, you start to re-train the unconscious mind to think in a certain way.