

## SLEEP DISTURBANCE AND SLEEP HYGIENE



Authored by  
**Dr. Nasser El Hindy**  
Consultant Psychiatrist, ACPN

Sleep disturbance is a very common presentation in our current modern life among adult population; in western countries at least 1 in 4 their sleep is disturbed.

*Causes of sleep disturbance could be broadly divided into 3 main categories:*

- Environmental/social causes, for example: moving to a new job or country, external noises or unfavorable room temperature etc.
- Some physical conditions and/or their treatments: for example chronic joint pain or in some heart conditions. Some medications have sleep disturbance as one of their possible side effects, for example, simvastatin and some antihypertensive medications (for example Bendroflumethiazide)
- Mental and behavioral disorders: sleep disturbance is one of the most common presentations in almost all mental health disorders, for example, anxiety disorders, depression, and schizophrenia.



### So how could you improve your sleep pattern?

The more you worry about insomnia, the less you will sleep. The harder you try to sleep, the less you will sleep. Sleep comes naturally when it is ready. It cannot be forced.

There are several advices that could be given in general to improve the quality of your sleep pattern, for example:

- Avoid problem-solving, planning and worrying in bed: remember that bed is for sleeping in, not for worrying, planning or solving problems, and try to learn to distract yourself from worrying thoughts and problems, for example, thinking of a relaxing holiday
- Don't lie-in the next day if you didn't sleep well and don't sleep / nap during the day, as both of these will upset your body-clock, reduce your need for sleep and stop you from sleeping the next night.
- Avoid caffeine after 3pm (remember: caffeine is present in tea, coffee, Coke, Pepsi, hot chocolate and chocolate etc. Caffeine is even present in some brand-name painkillers.
- Exercise and keeping fit: If you are fit, this helps you sleep.
- However, you should not exercise in the late evening as this will stimulate you and interfere with sleep.
- Do not eat a large meal late in the evening as this may cause indigestion and interfere with sleep.
- For environmental issues, for example, you could adjust the room temperature to your optimum, or use soft and spongy earplugs to control for the external noises (However you must be able to hear for example for any baby or young children, alarm clock or fire alarm etc.).
- For any physical and/or mental health conditions: it would be highly recommended to seek a professional advice from your local physical or mental health provider for further assessment and treatment if indicated.

Finally – You are never alone with insomnia. Millions of people around the world are lying awake with you – think of them and relax, knowing you are in good company!



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**Dr. Nasser El Hindy**  
Consultant Psychiatrist  
Awarded a diploma in Clinical Psychiatry (DCP) in 2007 from the Royal College of Physicians in Dublin, United Kingdom. Dr. Nasser has been a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (MRCPsych), UK since 2010. He also obtained a diploma in Cognitive and Behavioural Therapy (Dip.CBT) from Oxford College in 2012.  
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**Tamer Kanawati**  
Clinical Psychologist  
An American psychologist with a Master's in Clinical-Counseling Psychology from La Salle University in Philadelphia. Tamer received his Bachelor's of Psychological and Social Sciences from Pennsylvania State University in 2009. [Read more](#)

**Dr. Candice Render**  
Educational Psychologist,  
Head of Program - ACSA  
Prior to joining the American Center for Special Abilities (ACSA), Dr. Render worked as a Learning and Disabilities Specialist at Georgetown University in Qatar. In 2014, Dr. Render obtained her PhD degree in Human Services from Capella University in Minneapolis, USA. She earned her Bachelor of Science (BSc) Degree in Psychological Science in 1995, and her Master's degree in Counseling Psychology in 1997, both from Ball State University (BSU) in Muncie, USA. [Read more](#)