



## Sleep Well with Dr Sue

# An E-Guide to Overcoming Sleep Anxiety



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## OVERCOMING SLEEP ANXIETY

We need to consider insomnia as a problem that can be solved and change our thoughts about sleep.

It is about acknowledging that insomnia is frustrating and annoying, but your negative thoughts towards it won't change it. In this e-guide, we are going to look at how we can challenge those negative thoughts, emotions and beliefs about your sleep and put you back in control. Sleep is a learned behaviour, so we know that you can learn to sleep better!

Below describes the role of thoughts and feelings and the part they play in the whole process of managing your sleep.

It's important that we learn to recognise the effects of situations on our feelings. We all know that certain situations will produce certain emotions or feelings within us. For example, being let down by someone can make you feel happy or sad or angry or frustrated. Achieving a personal goal may make you feel happy, successful and positive about tackling your next goal.

Lack of sleep produces a whole range of feelings, both positive and negative. As you readjust to what you have been through, you can experience frustration and disappointment which must be expected at times.

Our feelings and emotions produce certain types of thinking. Negative thinking emotions such as frustration, anger, helplessness tend to produce negative thoughts such as:

"I can't cope without sleep"

"There is nothing that will help me out"

"My sleep is never going to get any better"

"I ought to be able to cope with this"

"I must get myself on top of all these problems"

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These negative thoughts are very destructive. They can put a lot of pressure on you. For example, if you tell yourself “I should be able to cope” you could push yourself and this could make your pain and sleep worse.

Negative thoughts such as those below can also stop you using your strategies such as improving your sleep hygiene, relaxation and self hypnosis.

“I haven’t sleep all night, so I can’t do anything today”

“I haven’t slept very much and I’m too tired to go for a walk, so I won’t be able to go out today”

Negative thinking will stop positive action, so..... what can YOU do with negative thinking?

Firstly, RECOGNIZE your negative thought “I haven’t had any sleep, everyone else sleeps well”;

NOTICE HOW THIS MAKES YOU FEEL- anxious, annoyed, jealous

THINK POSITIVELY BUT REALISTICALLY- “Although it feels like I haven’t had any sleep, in reality I probably have had some sleep if I look in my sleep diary. I know other people who have pain and don’t sleep well, so everyone isn’t sleeping!”

NOTICE HOW THIS MAKES YOU FEEL- less annoyed, reassured, more optimistic

It’s important to catch these negative thoughts as they occur and challenge them with positive but realistic statements. Positive thinking puts YOU in control of your situation.

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Once you start thinking positively, then it becomes easier to try all the practical things that will help with your sleep. Negative thinking stops you from taking control and often ends up making you feel worse.

It would be beneficial for you to take a little time and write down your negative thoughts in your notebook or journal and begin to challenge them in a realistic and positive way.

Negative thoughts create a vicious cycle; they stop you from taking positive action, which feeds into negative feeling or emotions and proves the negative thoughts to be true.

Consider the following questions when considering challenging your negative thoughts.

Am I confusing a thought with a fact? (what is the evidence?)

Am I jumping to conclusions?

Am I asking questions that have no answers?

Am I thinking in all or nothing terms? (always/ never/nothing/everything)

Am I concentrating on my weaknesses rather than my strengths?

Am I expecting myself to be perfect?

Am I overestimating the chances of disaster?

Am I exaggerating the importance of events?

Am I fretting about the way things ought to be, or how I wish they were?

Am I predicting the future instead of experimenting with it?

At first, you may find it hard to begin using positive statements. However as with any new skill, practice makes perfect and with time, you will begin to feel the benefits of breaking the negative cycle and start to feel and sleep better.

Here are some positive self- statements to help get you started:

“Almost certainly I will get some sleep”

“I know other people who don’t sleep well too”

“There are lots of factors, not just lack of sleep that makes my mood worse”

“When looking in my notebook/ journal, I usually average 5 hours, never less than 3”