Do's and Don'ts of Sleep

Do...

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Even if you have trouble falling asleep the night before, try to wake up at the same time. This helps maintaining your body's natural sleep cycle.
- Reserve your bedroom for sleep (and sex) only.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise in moderate amounts early in the day.
- Create a relaxing sleep environment. Prepare your bedroom to provide maximum comfort and minimal distraction.
- Determine your optimal amount of sleep. Systematically work toward obtaining the right amount of sleep each night.
- Keep a notepad by your bed to jot down the issues causing your stress as you try to go to sleep. Let those issues go for the night, knowing that you can pick up thinking about them in the morning.
- Breathe deeply and stretch your body. Consider an easy nightly stretching routine that includes deep breathing as a way to relax and prepare for a good night's sleep.
- Keep naps short and sweet. Try to sleep enough at night that you don't need naps during the day. If you do need a quick siesta, keep it to 20 or 30 minutes, as that length of time has been shown to improve alertness.
- Turn off the bright lights of computers and phones within 2-3 hours of going to bed. If you can, try to structure your work so that you're spending your time at night reading books or articles on paper late at night rather than work on your computer. If you can't, consider getting a blue light filter (available as an app on most devices or as a physical filter you can purchase). For more info, see: http://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/blue-light-has-a-dark-side [1]
- Give mindfulness a try. Research shows it can fight insomnia and help you get better quality sleep. Here are some mindfulness meditations for sleep you can try: http://www.nosleeplessnights.com/mindfulness-exercises/ [2]

Don't...

- Don't take naps during the evening.
- Don't exercise vigorously in the evening.
- Don't drink caffeine-containing beverages (coffee, tea, soft drinks) after dinner.
• Don't eat heavy or spicy food in the evening.
• Don't eat late evening meals or drink large quantities of liquids in the evening.
• Don't watch TV, eat, or read in bed.
• Don't pull all nighters. Sleep is essential to retaining information.
• Don't lie awake in bed for long periods of time. If you can't fall asleep within 15 minutes, get out of bed. Write down your thoughts or do something relaxing before trying to fall back asleep again.
• Don't compete. Everyone has different sleep needs, so encourage your friends to get what they need rather than bragging about how late you can stay awake.

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