

Childrens' Sleep Problems

Some common examples of sleep problems experienced by children include:

- Frequent awakening during the night
- Talking during sleep
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Waking up crying
- Feeling sleepy during the day
- Having nightmares; or
- Bedwetting
- Teeth grinding and clenching
- Waking early.

Many childhood sleep problems are related to poor sleep habits or to anxiety about going to bed and falling asleep. Persistent sleep problems may also be symptoms of emotional difficulties. "Separation anxiety" is a developmental landmark for young children. For all young children, bedtime is a time of separation. Some children will do all they can to prevent separation at bedtime. However, to help minimize common sleep problems, a parent should develop consistent bedtime and sleep routines for children.

Nightmares are relatively common during childhood and can begin at a variety of ages. For some children nightmares are serious, frequent, and interfere with restful sleep.

When sleep disturbance occurs several times a night, or nightly for weeks at a time, or interfere with the child's daytime behavior, parents with ongoing concerns should contact their pediatrician or directly seek consultation with a child and adolescent behavioral health professional.

Remember, involvement in a traumatic event can produce upsetting responses such as disturbed sleep, diminished appetite, and difficulty concentrating.

These responses will likely subside with time. However, if reactions are especially long lasting or troubling, you may need to turn to a professional for assistance.

Benefits of Counseling

Some of the benefits of seeking counseling are:

- Reviewing the incident and processing the event can help victims clarify what actually occurred.
- Legal and judicial decisions can be discussed and utilized as part of the promotion of healing and resolution.
- Disruption due to trauma can make daily functioning difficult. Counseling can help develop coping skills and strategies, allowing for the continuance of school, work or relationships.
- Establishment of a support network helps to decrease the negative physical, psychological and emotional effects that often result from the traumatic experience.

Survivors can utilize the experience as an opportunity to build and practice assertiveness, confidence, and protective instinct skills.

Who can help?

The Mesa Police Department Victim Services Unit can assist with information regarding Victims' Rights, Victim Compensation, case status, navigation of the criminal justice system and referrals to other appropriate helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.

Resources

Community Information and Referral

(602) 263-8856

EMPACT Crisis Hotline

(480) 784-1500

Arizona Criminal Justice Commission

1110 W Washington Ste#230, Phoenix, AZ 85007

(602) 364-1146

acjc@azcjc.gov

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)

P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000

1-800-851-3420

Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice

810 Seventh Street NW., Eighth Floor, Washington, DC 20531

(202) 307-5983

www.ovc.gov

Victim Services Unit

Tips for Sleeping



Mesa Police Department
Victim Services Unit
130 N Robson
Mesa, AZ 85201
(480) 644-4075

This brochure provides information for you and your family in dealing with trouble sleeping that may be the result of experiencing a traumatic event or crisis.

Common Causes for Sleep Problems

- Trauma or Crisis— the body may dump chemicals into your system in what is known as the “fight or flight” response.
- Stress— school or job-related stress, family or relationship stress, worry about a serious medical condition, death of a loved one, etc.
- Shift work— the night shift pits the sleep cycle against the body’s natural rhythm.
- Jet lag— the body is responding to another time zone.
- Noise— a snoring partner, barking dog, loud neighbors, soaring airplanes, etc.
- Environmental discomfort— too hot, too cold, too light, bed’s too hard, etc.
- Medications— some medications interrupt sleep (talk with your doctor if you are noticing a side effect).
- Sleep disorders— such as sleep apnea, which is interrupted breathing during sleep.
- Caffeine intake— especially when consumed in the evening hours.
- Tobacco use— nicotine craving can wake up users three to four hours after they go to bed.
- Alcohol use— deprives users of deep, restorative sleep.

Do I have a sleep problem?

Sleep restores the body and mind and helps us maintain our mental and physical health. At one time or another we all may experience the inability to get adequate sleep. You may be experiencing a sleep problem now if you answer yes to any of the following questions:

- Does it take you more than 30 minutes to fall asleep?
- Are you awake for a significant amount of time during the night?
- Do you wake in the middle of the night and find it difficult to go back to sleep?
- Do you wake up groggy and still tired?
- Do you experience daytime drowsiness?

What May Help

When you are filled with emotional pain and have a million worries, it is hard to get a good night’s sleep. Don’t be concerned if you don’t get a full night’s sleep every night, because people can manage on less sleep than they think. However, these tips should help to get some of that needed rest.

- Have the same “sleep time” ritual every night. For an hour before retiring, do the same quiet routine to get ready. Try to go to bed at the same time each night.
- Try including some new activities in the routine that are boring or repetitive. Rocking in a rocking chair or brushing your hair are helpful repetitive activities. Looking at a picture book or reading something that normally ‘puts you to sleep’ are helpful boring activities.
- If you find yourself remembering “things to do” or worrying as you try to go to sleep, make a list before beginning your sleep routine. Then mentally and physically put the list aside for tomorrow.
- When you lay down, try progressively relaxing the muscles of your body. Beginning with your face, relax those muscles.

Then try your head. Follow with you neck. Keep relaxing muscles as you “move” down your body all the way to the very tip of your toes. Many individuals fall asleep before they reach their feet.

- If you cannot go to sleep within 20 minutes, get up. You are less likely to fall asleep the longer you toss and turn. Try some quiet, boring and/or repetitive activities until you feel ready to try and go to sleep again.
- Sleep where you “fall.” If you feel sleepy watching TV, just go to sleep there. Now, while the emotional stress is so high, it is better to catch some sleep where you can. Later, when your life has settled down, you can retrain yourself to sleep in a bed.
- If you are awakened by night terrors (waking up suddenly, feeling terrified), try to make your home feel as safe as possible. Take any measures you can to feel secure where you sleep.
- If you have nightmares or uncomfortable dreams, do not just try to ignore them. Write them down in the night when you wake up. Think about what they mean and think of ways you could “change” the dream to make it more tolerable.
- Leave your troubles outside the bedroom door. Make your bedroom a worry-free zone. If you start to ruminate about problems when you are in bed, try relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or visualization.
- Create a cozy sleep environment: wear comfortable pajamas, make the temperature of the room comfortable for you, darken the room, use soft comfortable bedding that enhances your sleep experience. If your bed is too hard or lumpy invest in a new one. If noise is an issue, try to get at the root of the problem: you may ask your neighbors to be quieter, etc.
- When you are well rested, you will be better able to cope with stress.
- If you experience a sleep problem for one week or longer, talk with your doctor. He or she can evaluate you for a sleep disorder and suggest additional lifestyle changes or treatment options.