



## What You Should Know

Many people have difficulty sleeping after a disaster, such as trouble falling asleep or staying asleep or waking too early. To make it worse, the way that you behave and think can trigger a cycle that continues the sleep problems. The cycle starts with worrying that you're not getting enough sleep and that you won't be able to make it through your day. Once you start worrying, you'll have even more difficulty getting to sleep.

## What Can Help

- **Use calming strategies.** Try to calm your body and mind with strategies such as breathing exercises, meditation, stretching, yoga, prayer, or listening to quiet music.
- **Change your behaviors and routines to those that promote regular sleep.**  
For example:
  - Wake up at the same time every day. Don't "sleep in" for more than one hour.
  - Allow a wind-down time prior to sleep. Spend 30 minutes doing something non-stressful and non-stimulating (turn off your television and computer).
  - Have a bedtime routine that can remind your body that it is time to go to bed, such as taking a bath, listening to quiet music, or reading a book.
  - Use your bed only for sleep and sexual activity.
  - Do not stay in bed when you are not asleep. If you cannot fall asleep in about 20 minutes, get up and go to another room until you feel sleepy, then try again.
  - Avoid caffeine. Don't have coffee, tea, cocoa, or cola drinks after 4 p.m.
  - Avoid nicotine and alcohol. Both can interfere with deeper sleep cycles.
  - Avoid sleeping pills.
  - Avoid exercise three hours before going to bed.
- **Practice helpful thinking.** Watch out for unhelpful thoughts that can interfere with sleep, such as, "If I don't get enough sleep, I won't be able to do anything tomorrow" or "Not sleeping is really unhealthy." Replace these thoughts with new ones such as "I'll do okay—I've done fine on little sleep before" and "If I relax and stop thinking this way, I'll be able to get more sleep."
- **Consider talking to a medical or other healthcare practitioner.** He/She may be able to help if using these strategies does not improve your sleep.