

Sleep Deprivation Versus Insomnia: Know the Difference

It is critical to know the difference between sleep deprivation and insomnia. The individuals with the two conditions experience similar symptoms of lack of sleep. However, the cause and approach to behavioral management differ. The significant differences between sleep deprivation versus insomnia are:

	SLEEP DEPRIVATION	INSOMNIA
THE UNDERLYING CAUSE	There is an ability to sleep, but there is no opportunity for it. The reason is persistent late-night work and social schedules or the night shift work. One can compare this situation to “food deprivation” in that the ability to eat is there, but there is no food available.	There is plenty of opportunities to sleep, but there is no ability to sleep. The reasons are anxiety, fear, stress, and harmful habits of eating late in the night and waking up late in the morning. These factors create a negative situation for falling asleep and staying asleep.
SLEEP ONSET TIME The average time between getting into bed and sleep onset is 20-30 minutes. This time differs when there is sleep deprivation versus when there is insomnia.	Sleep-deprived individuals will fall asleep very quickly within a few minutes of getting into the bed. No time wasted in tossing and turning.	Anxiety, stressful thoughts, late-night meals, and late morning wake up get in the way of falling and staying asleep. There may be tossing and turning in bed for a long time. The sleep, when it comes, is interrupted and not restful.
BEHAVIORAL OR ATTITUDE DIFFERENCES	Self-imposed or work-imposed sleep deprivation carries with it the deep-rooted sentiment in the individual’s mind that sleep is a waste of time. That sentiment has created the modern cultural clichés like “If you snooze, you lose.” These individuals typically claim that they are unique in that they can get away with 4 to 5 hours of sleep every day. They go to bed with a big “to-do list” in their minds. A simple attitude change these individuals require is to know the value of sleep. And, the behavior change they require	These individuals have the deep-rooted fear and anxiety in their mind about not getting good sleep. The insomniac brain is preoccupied and possessed by the thoughts of not being able to get good sleep. The apprehension, fear, and negative thoughts consume their daily life. A good example, “If I do not sleep tonight, how will I function tomorrow?” or even worse, “I may lose my job if I continue missing out on sleep.” The more the time in bed trying to fall asleep, the higher is the rush of negative thoughts and anxiety. The sensible advice for these

	is “set aside time for unwinding and sleep.”	people is, restrict the sleep time, do not get into the bed until sleepy, stay awake during the day for 16 hours to build a sleep drive. Finally, get out of the bed if not getting sleep in the usual 30-40 minutes as tossing and turning worsens the problem.
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It is essential to be familiar with the above differences to be able to figure out which behavior therapy will be suitable for fixing the sleep problem.