

Common FAQs about Stimulus Control

Questions	Answers
Why do you want me to limit the bed and bedroom to sleep (and sex) only?	- You should not do things other than sleeping when in bed (such as reading, watching TV, eating, studying, using the phone, or doing other activities in bed during the day). By doing these things you train yourself to stay awake in bed. Sexual activity is the only exception to this rule. The most important thing to avoid is “trying to sleep” because it blocks you from getting the sleep that you want.
Do I really have to go to bed at the same time every night? 	- Yes! Your ideal bedtime is set by your fixed rise time and the fixed number of hours you can be in bed that we decided upon earlier. - However, it is important that you consider this recommended bedtime as your <u>earliest</u> time that you can go to bed. Do not go to bed before you are sleepy. Sleep cannot be forced. - If you do not feel sleepy at your set time, wait until you do feel sleepy. When you are very sleepy, it is as if you have to almost struggle to stay awake. If you feel like this AND you are within your scheduled sleep window, this is a good time to go to bed. - If you go to sleep later than your recommended bedtime, do not “sleep in” or delay your wake time the next morning.
What should I do if I can’t sleep? 	- If you are unable to sleep, stop trying to sleep. Get out of bed and do something pleasant but that does not make you feel too awake. - Long periods of being awake in bed often lead to tossing and turning, becoming frustrated and worrying about not sleeping, all of which make it harder to fall asleep. The longer you lie in bed awake trying to sleep, wanting and hoping to go back to sleep, the more you will be awake in bed. - If you feel you are awake for 10 to 15 minutes or so and you do not feel as though you are about to go to sleep, you should <u>leave the bed and, if possible, leave the bedroom</u>. <u>Try not to use a clock to decide when to get out of bed because looking at the clock can lead to worrying about not sleeping, which will make it harder to fall asleep.</u> Do not dwell on this decision. If it is obvious to you that you will not immediately fall asleep, get up. <i>What do I do when I am out of bed?</i> Sleep naturally happens when you are calm and content. So the activities you choose to do when you get out of bed should make you feel calm and content. It helps to have some possible activities planned out ahead of time. When you feel sleepy (not tired), then you may return to bed. <i>What if I never feel sleepy?</i> Getting out of bed when you can’t sleep will teach you the difference between feeling sleepy and feeling tired. If you do not feel sleepy again before your rise time, stay out of bed; this will help you build

	your sleep need for the next night. Going to bed when you are truly sleepy also makes it more likely you will fall asleep quickly. • If you only follow this rule sometimes (and other times you do not follow the rule), this can undo the benefits of this recommendation. • The most important thing to improve your sleep is to STOP trying harder.
What do I do when I can't shut off my thinking? 	• Thinking about small and big worries, stresses, or the next day's to-do's while in bed can make you feel tense or irritated and this will affect your sleep. If you can't seem to shut off your thoughts, get up and go to another room. Stay there until you feel sleepy again. • If you continue to have trouble shutting off your thoughts, you may find it helpful to set aside time each day to do the thinking, worrying, problem-solving, and planning you need to do. Then, if intrusive thoughts occur during your sleep period, put them off until "worry time" on the next day. The time you set aside for this should not be close to bedtime and the place where you do this activity should not be your bedroom. • During the time you set aside you can list your concerns and then decide what steps you can take to deal with each problem. Don't try to deal with more than one problem at a time.
Do I have to get up at the same time every day? 	• Yes! The best way to set your body clock is to stick to your fixed rise time every day no matter how much sleep you actually get on a given night. A changing schedule, particularly different rise times each morning, can exacerbate your sleep problem. Getting up at different times each morning can create the type of sleep problem that occurs in jetlag. • Using an alarm clock to wake you is a good idea. It is very important to <u>get out of bed when your alarm rings</u>. • <i>What if I wake up shortly before my alarm?</i> If you are unlikely to return to sleep and/or have only 10-15 minutes before your alarm, go ahead and get out of bed.
Why shouldn't I nap? 	• Sleeping at any time other than your scheduled time lessens the quality of your nighttime sleep. • However, if you find yourself very sleepy (not just tired, but actually sleepy) and you are doing something for which you need to be alert such as driving or using machines, you may take a short (15 to 30 minutes) nap to ensure safety. • If you need to take a short nap, do so in the bed (remember we are trying to pair your bed with sleeping); again, limiting nap time will allow you to feel sleepy tonight. If you can't access your bed for this nap consider a place you don't mind having paired with feeling sleepy (we don't suggest napping in your car because the car will become associated with feeling sleepy).
What is a "wind down routine?"	• A wind down routine allows for a quiet time prior to bed time. It is a buffer from the activities of the day. During this time, you should do things that are enjoyable on their own. • Examples include light reading, calming hobbies, and relaxation practice. • Stimulating activities such as TV or exercise should be avoided.