

Help for when you're wide-eyed at 3 a.m.

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(HealthDay)—Something like this has happened to most of us: You wake up, wide awake, only to discover that it's 3 a.m. Suddenly your mind fills with worry about how hard tomorrow will be if you don't get more sleep. The problem is, you toss and turn and can't get back to sleep.

What to do?

First, don't keep your eyes trained on the clock. That just adds to your distress.

Instead, clear your mind and relax your body. Tighten a muscle for a few seconds and then release. One by one, try this with a few muscle groups—your feet, legs, stomach, for instance. Focus on how relaxed your body is becoming.

If you're still awake a few minutes later, though, get up and out of bed. In fact, leave the bedroom. Go to another room to listen to soothing music or read a boring book—not a heart-racing thriller. If you start to feel drowsy, return to bed.

If not, be productive and do a chore you've been putting off. You might feel tired later on, but you'll have a sense of accomplishment about completing the task.

One night of disrupted [sleep](#) is not uncommon—it's something most everyone has experienced. But if insomnia becomes a pattern, it's time to correct [lifestyle habits](#).

Are you drinking too much caffeine? Using electronics too late into the evening? Exercising too close to bedtime?

Restricting late-in-the-day caffeine and tech usage should help. But don't stop exercising—just do it earlier in the day.

It's also possible that an underlying health issue is playing a role in your sleep issue. For instance, [sleep apnea](#), reflux or pain from a [chronic condition](#) can make it hard to fall sleep or wake you up in the middle of the night. Talk to your doctor about steps to better control your health

and get the sleep you need.

If you have a clean bill of health and are still plagued by insomnia, consider [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) to change [negative thoughts](#) about sleep and relax your mind. Some therapists, as well as online programs, offer short-term versions of this therapy designed specifically for insomnia.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has information on [healthy sleep](#).

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