



Dr. Bill Moorcroft



Sleep Problems Update

Number 20

Case Study: A Common Case of Complex Insomnia

Patient: SC, a 34 y/o IT manager.

Problem: SC's presenting complaint was awakening after about 4 hours of sleep, then feeling like he never returned to deep sleep. In the morning he awoke "groggy" and complained of much interference with daily functioning because of cognitive problems such as "spotty recall," continuing grogginess, and being somewhat more easily frustrated.

He also revealed that he had not been a good sleeper since he was a teenager, but his sleep problems were more noticeable now. He felt that he had poor sleep every night of the week.

He also stated that some nights he had trouble falling asleep because of body restlessness, yet if he got up and went to the couch, he could fall asleep. He also revealed some waking worry about his sleep especially as bedtime approached. He stated that he was unable to nap. Sleeping pills were not working for him, although he continued to take them

A couple of months prior to seeing me he had had a sleep study that revealed very mild Sleep Disorder Breathing (sleep apnea) but also several unexplained arousals per hour. The report also emphasized his "fragmented sleep architecture" with unusually high amount of stage 1 (very light) sleep, little deep SWS, and much wakefulness during the sleep period resulting in a Sleep Efficiency of 79% (versus a norm of over 90%).

When asked about what he thought might be contributing to his sleep problems, he replied, "I'm a champion worrier" and "normal life stresses keep me awake."

Diagnosis: Mild Obstructive Sleep Apnea (327.23) complicated by Psychophysiological Insomnia (307.42). Additionally, SC most

likely had Paradoxical Insomnia (307.42), which is the perception of not sleeping when sleep is actually occurring. However, the sleep that is obtained may be light and is

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clearly not perceived by the sleeper to be restful and restorative.

Treatment: It was necessary to get several treatment pieces in place over the course of several weeks before he reported a no-

ticeable improvement is his sleep. He was fitted with a "dental appliance" by Dr. Dennis Bailey in Denver to alleviate his mild sleep disordered breathing. In the meantime, I taught him how to produce a quick wave of relaxation through his body when he felt restless. I also gave him instructions and mental exercises to reduce the worries and concerns that were keeping him awake at night and how to close out the day before he went to bed. Additionally, I helped him to put greater focus and value on his emotions and to enhance his imaging ability. These techniques were aimed at rebalancing his cognitive processes because of his over emphasis on rational thinking. Later I gave him guidance on how to effectively taper off of his sleeping pills.

Did You Know?

Board Certified Sleep Physician, Dr Barry Krakow, in his forthcoming book, Sound Sleep, Sound Mind; Sleep Dynamic Therapy, states that some people over-value thinking and productivity to the extent that when they go to bed "they do not really want to be asleep" because "their day is not done." This is the case with many in our high tech world that emphasizes productivity. Such was the case with SC. After getting some deep sleep early in the night, he would awaken and never get back to deep sleep. His mind was too active, even when he was sleeping, preventing him from returning to deep sleep. The result was non-restful, non-restorative sleep. Such people need to be taught how to decide that "day-is-done" at bedtime. They also need to learn to put less value rational thinking and on getting things done. This helps them to allow their minds and bodies to relax so that restful, continuous, deep sleep may occur. Without doing this, even sleeping pills can be inadequate.

Outcome: It took awhile, but eventually, as these treatment components came into place, SC's problems with falling asleep dissipated. Eventually his sleep efficiency improved. Several months later he related that he now gets more sleep, seven uninterrupted hours on some nights, and he is more refreshed. "I feel like the oral appliance coupled with the relaxation and cognitive exercises to which you introduced me have made a significant impact to my sleep habits."