**Maintaining the Zzzzzs: How to Keep Sleeping Well**

This is Dr. Christensen with Byte-Sized podcast. Today, I have Brittany with me. Three months ago, it was hard for her to fall asleep and she would wake up at least 2 times every night.

We started by having Brittany take melatonin, an over-the-counter sleep medicine, before bed at night. She also worked on improving her bedtime routine with the basics of sleep hygiene. Brittany chose to focus on having a consistent bedtime schedule. Let’s see how Brittany is sleeping now.

Dr. Christensen: Good morning, Brittany! The last time we talked, you were struggling with sleep. How is sleep now?

**Brittany (**teenager with enthusiasm**)**: Sleep is so much better. I am not even taking melatonin anymore. I make sure to go to bed at the same time each night. Even on weekends, I don’t stay up more than 1 hour later than on school nights. Even though sleep is much better now, I worry about having this problem again.

Dr. Christensen: Great work improving your sleep! It sounds like you were able to meet your goal of going to bed around the same time every night. It often works helps to focus on on one behavior change at a time.

It makes sense to worry about sleep problems returning. The key is to identify the problem early. One bad night of sleep does not have to restart the cycle. What is your current bedtime routine?

**Brittany**: I have found some meditations I like with deep breathing. I listen to one about 30 minutes before bed. I also have a lavender spray I find relaxing. At first, I did a better job of avoiding my phone an hour before bed. Recently, I have been checking it shortly before going to bed. I usually fall asleep at 9 pm and wake up at 6:30 am.

Dr. Christensen: That’s great you are practicing daily meditation. I also enjoy the scent of lavender. It can be very calming. If you start to have trouble falling asleep or waking up at night, go back to limiting the use of your cellphone before bed. This will likely make a big diﬀerence. Would you be willing to change your cell phone use if not getting sleep at night?

**Brittany (**grumbles a little**)**: I think so. I have thought about not using it before bed but it hasn’t been an issue yet. I think if I cannot sleep again, it would motivate me to stop using it so much before falling asleep.

Dr. Christensen: Screens provide light that can confuse the brain about what time of day it is. You can also use melatonin as needed if sleep is a challenge. Melatonin is something your body naturally produces to help let your body know it is time to sleep.

If you do have a night of poor sleep, it is important to continue to go to bed and get up at the same time. Changing this routine can start leading to more sleep problems at night. It is also important to avoid naps during the day if not sleeping well at night. Are you getting any exercise?

**Brittany**: I haven’t been recently. I remember you saying that daily exercise can also help. I would like to start walking my dog again.

Dr. Christensen: Daily exercise can provide a lot of benefit. I like the idea of walking your dog. I know this is something you have also found to help lower anxiety. Is there a time of day you could start walking your dog?

**Brittany**: I think around 4 pm would work, before dinner.

Dr. Christensen: Scheduling a time for these activities can help you to stick with them. It might help to put that in your calendar as a reminder.

**Brittany**: That is a good idea. I will do that. I have alarms now that tell me when it’s an hour before bed and that has helped with my routine.

Dr. Christensen: You are doing so many things well and worked hard to improve your sleep. We talked about a few more tools in your toolbox you can use if you have trouble again. I will review them briefly:

* limit cellphone use to at least 1 hour before bed
* Go to bed and wake up at the same time even if you did not sleep well during the night
* Do not take napes
* Taking melatonin as needed
* Daily exercise

And of course, if you get stuck, you can always reach out to the clinic and we can talk about a plan.