

DISCUSSING YOUR INSOMNIA



If you've been diagnosed with insomnia, you may find that the challenges of your condition make it hard to maintain close relationships with friends and family members. Fatigue, mood swings, and stigma surrounding insomnia can contribute to these difficulties. But it's critical to stay in touch with people who are honest, empathetic, and open with you—and with whom you can express yourself freely. Here are a few tips that can help you keep your relationships open and positive.



WITH YOUR FAMILY

Ask for help: Explain the limitations of your insomnia so they can understand how you feel. Discuss ways they can support you around the home and in everyday life, like helping to make meals, clean the house, or take care of pets.

Set boundaries: Speak with your partner and/or children about bedroom rules. Limit noise levels, bright lights, and TV usage in close proximity to the sleeping space. If you share a room with someone who has disruptive routines like snoring, or making noise in the early morning, speak with him or her about these habits. Test out if sleeping elsewhere, white noise, or earplugs solve the problem.



WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Making plans: Explain that missing social gatherings isn't personal, but necessary to remain physically and mentally well. Late nights can jeopardize your sleep and in turn throw off your mood and ability to function. You can maintain friendships with daytime activities, phone calls, and messaging apps.

Communicate: Talk about any mood-related impacts of insomnia, such as fatigue and condition-related stress. Explain that while some days you may seem different and lack energy, you still value their friendship.

Stand firm: While alcohol and coffee are often found at social gatherings, they're also two major contributors to disrupted sleep patterns. Firmly tell friends that while you may attend activities with people drinking, you may forgo the beverages.



WITH COLLEAGUES

Dealing with stigma: Some office cultures include boasting about how tired a colleague may be due to putting in overtime. Sleep (or lack thereof) may be thrown about as a necessary sacrifice for productivity and advancement. If or when you feel uncomfortable in a similar situation, consider speaking with colleagues about the implications of lack of sleep on someone like you.

Seek out mentors: When you experience stigma in the workplace, like the belief that those with insomnia may be weak or dishonest, seek out an ally or mentor to discuss the implications. While office happy hours and coffee meetings serve as opportunities to introduce colleagues or to establish connections with leadership, you can suggest other ways to connect.

Sources: APA.org, ADAA.org, Mayoclinic.org, Nami.org, NIH.gov, Sleepfoundation.org

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