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INTERNATIONAL GRIEF INSTITUTE  
**RESILIENCE**  
**RX™**

**INSOMNIA**  
**AFTER LOSS**

**Self care**  
**techniques**  
**for the bereaved**

The science behind why they work and how to implement them after loss



An iCare Aftercare™ resource  
International Grief Institute

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## BENEFITS

Healthy sleep habits are an essential part of caring for yourself, and can make a big difference in your quality of life. Studies show that good sleep helps you cope better in times of stress. It can also lower your blood pressure, improve your memory, help keep your immunity strong, and puts you in a better mood.

Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace.

VICTOR HUGO

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Known as good sleep hygiene, healthy bedtime habits can influence the body's circadian rhythms. Healthy daytime habits, including what you eat, drink, how much daylight and physical exercise you get, also play roles.

## SLEEP TIPS

Try the following suggestions from the National Sleep Foundation to help you reestablish a restorative sleep pattern after losing someone you love.

- To help regulate your body's clock, stick to a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake time, even on weekends.
- Create a relaxing bedtime ritual, such as a warm bath or reading, to give your body time to wind down.
- Exercise early in the day. Vigorous exercise is best, but even light exercise is better than no exercise.
- A sleep environment between 60 and 67 degrees is ideal.
- If your partner snores, consider using a fan, earplugs, or white noise.
- Use comfortable pillows and bed linen.
- Consider moving around the bedroom furniture, repainting the bedroom walls, and purchasing new bed linen.
- Try wearing a sleep mask or weighted blanket across your feet to help reduce stimuli and calm your mind.



## NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Managing sleep disruption and insomnia by practicing good sleep hygiene, coupled with medical management when needed, can help restore a restful sleep pattern after loss, and lead to significant improvements in other distress symptoms.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, 2008

## WHAT TO AVOID

- Avoid bright light in the evening to keep your circadian rhythm in check.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, cigarettes, and heavy meals later in the day.
- Alcohol makes people feel sleepy, but actually disrupts restorative sleep patterns.

## NOTE

If you continue to struggle with sleepless nights after trying the tips, cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the top suggestions for treating long-term sleep disruption. Speak to your doctor to learn more about this process.