Strategies to Improve Sleep

Sleep problems are common for those who are grieving. Here are some helpful strategies:

- Exercise more during the day: gentle walking, swimming, gardening
- Try Relaxation Techniques:
  - Muscle Relaxation
  - Mental Imagery, visualize your safe calm place (controlled daydreaming)
  - Deep Breathing (long and slowly, 5 seconds in through nose filling up your belly and 5 seconds out through the mouth)
- Massage reduces stress and promotes relaxation
- Chamomile tea is also often used for relaxation
- Keep your bedroom dark and cool
- No Caffeine and limit sugar after 4 pm
- Limit Napping
- No visual media after 8 pm (no texting, TV/computer, within 1 hour of bedtime)
- Write next days to do list one hour before bed - don't worry in bed
- Keep a diary, two hours before bed write down your worries. Then write three things you are thankful for.
- Bedtime and wake time should not change by more than 1 hour between weekdays and weekends
- No exercise within 2 hours of bedtime
- Avoid large meals or beverages right before bedtime
- Eat a high-protein/high-fat snack 1 hour before bed (2 peanut butter crackers or a boiled egg)
- Bed is for Sleeping:
  - No clock watching: turn the face of clock away from view
  - If you wake at night, don't look at the clock, turn on the lights, watch TV, or eat; instead, use relaxation techniques – belly breathing, calm safe place, animal ABC’s.
  - If you've laid in bed for more than one hour, get up and go to reading chair: read "brain popcorn" (light, simple) – book or magazine or draw in coloring book.
  - When sleepy, go back to bed (for another 30 minutes)

If serious symptoms of insomnia continue after using these methods: Consider discussing sleep concerns with your primary physician.

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