

# Having trouble sleeping?

Disruptions in your usual sleep patterns are very common in the first weeks and months of grieving. When you experience grief and its accompanying stress, your brain is flooded with neurochemicals that keep you awake, such as epinephrine and adrenaline. These neurochemicals remain present in your brain for anywhere between a half an hour to a couple of days and can interrupt your normal sleep cycle through:

- Troubling thoughts and images
- A perceived need to be on alert
- Nightmares that cause you to wake up in the middle of the night and make it difficult to go back to sleep

Even once the neurochemicals in your brain have returned to their usual levels, sleeplessness can continue.

## The following tips may help you to sleep a little better:

**Avoid napping during the day.** It can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness.

**Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol too close to bedtime.**

**Exercise can promote good sleep.** A relaxing exercise, like yoga, can be done before bed to help lead into a restful night's sleep.

**Food can be disruptive right before sleep.** Stay away from large meals close to bedtime.

**Ensure you get sufficient natural light by spending time outside.** Light exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

**Get into a regular relaxing bedtime routine.** Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before trying to go to sleep.

**Write out your thoughts/dreams/nightmares.** This could be a helpful way to express what is keeping you awake.

**Call Lifeline on 13 11 14 to talk it out.** Often talking through what is happening for you can put concerns to rest – and then you can rest.

You may like to try a relaxation breathing exercise like this which, with practice, can help you to go to sleep within a couple of minutes (prevention.com):

*It is important to remember that it is also normal to sleep a lot – this is your body's way of assisting you to cope better with strong emotions.*

