

DECODE INSOMNIA

# JUMPSTART

GUIDE #1



## HOW TO SET UP A COZY NOOK & SLEEP KIT

CARA OOI, MD

# Why a Cozy Nook & Sleep Kit?



Do you often feel alert in bed? You feel tired but you just can't settle? Does your mind often become busy in bed?

An incredibly common but sneaky reason why you can't settle in bed is that you may have developed a negative association with your bed. Because of a lot of time awake in bed, you may have become trained to automatically and unconsciously become more alert and awake in bed.

Essentially, your bed has become a cue or trigger for alertness, making it very difficult to power down effectively for good sleep.

This is similar to why you may suddenly feel hungry when you sit on the couch (even though you've just finished dinner) if you are used to snacking in front of the TV.

The good news is that you can train yourself to associate your bed with a calm and sleepy state by cutting down on your time awake in bed, by reserving your bed for sleep only, and by only getting into bed when sleepy.

Now, you may be thinking 'I know this'. I hear this a lot...yet almost everyone still spends too much time awake in bed. In the moment, especially if you're tired and stressed out, it's just too easy to default to the comfort of your bed if you don't have a solid alternative.

This is why setting Comfy Nook & Sleep Box is one of the best first steps you can take to get your sleep on track.

Now, let's talk specifics...

## HOW TO SET UP A COZY NOOK



**Clear a space and set-up a comfortable spot where you can relax.**

Options: comfortable chair, bean bag chair, a pile of cushions, or a second mattress.

Make sure this spot is really easy to get to from your bed. Avoid less comfortable options like a desk chair.

**Add a dim light source.**

Consider purchasing a dim, amber tinted reading light so that you don't have to rely on overhead lights or side lamps that are too bright and stimulating.



**Add the cozy extras & your Sleep Kit.**

Options: a sweater, a housecoat, slippers, a blanket, extra pillows.

Create and keep your Sleep Kit nearby so that you have relaxing things to do when you cannot sleep.

# Sleep Kit Options

- NOTEBOOK
- PENS
- JOURNAL PROMPT BOOK
- ART SUPPLIES
- COLOURING BOOKS
- BUILDING MATERIALS
- PUZZLES
- GAMES
- STRESS BALL
- PRINTED BOOKS
- PRINTED ARTICLES
- PRINTED MAGAZINES
- A PICTURE ALBUM
- OLD CARDS & LETTERS
- MEMENTOS
- REMINDERS & QUOTES
- ITEMS TO TINKER WITH
- SENSORY ITEMS
- AUDIOBOOKS\*
- RELAXING PLAYLIST\*
- PODCAST EPISODES\*
- MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS
- ITEMS FOR SELF-CARE
- DECODE CHEATSHEETS\*\*

## OTHER IDEAS

*\*Choose and set-up audio ahead of time to avoid having to look at screens. A smart speaker like an Alexa, Echo, or Google Nest can come in handy here.*

*\*\*DECODE Framework and 3-Step Plan for When You Can't Sleep. Visit [decodeinsomnia.com](https://decodeinsomnia.com) to learn more.*

GET IT DONE IN LESS THAN AN HOUR

# CHECKLIST

COZY NOOK & SLEEP KIT

- Gather things from around the home: a big box to clear clutter for the Nook, a container/basket for the Sleep Kit, items for the Cozy Nook & Sleep Kit (notebook, pens, etc.). [10 min]
- Set a timer and set up your 1st versions of the Nook & Kit. [20 min]
- Jot down items needed then place an order or schedule a time to go shopping. [10 min]

- Choose a deadline for when you will aim to have versions of the Cozy Nook and the Sleep Kit that are working for you. Add this deadline to your calendar and set an alert so that you remember to follow-through. [1 min]

DEADLINE:

- Try out the first versions of your Cozy Nook & Sleep Kit tonight. As you figure out what's working and what's not, keep making improvements.

# Using the Cozy Nook & Sleep Kit

## BEFORE GETTING INTO BED FOR THE NIGHT

Do not get into bed until you feel on the edge of sleep. In the meantime, do something else relaxing in your Cozy Nook. Ask yourself "What is the chance out of 10 that I will fall asleep in the next 10 minutes." If 7 or less, stay out of bed.

## IF IN BED AND UNABLE TO SLEEP (AT THE BEGINNING OR MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT)

If you are awake for more than 15 minutes in bed, get out of bed and go to your Cozy Nook and do something relaxing from your Sleep Kit. Try to avoid anything that will stimulate you (turning on lights, using devices). Get back into bed only when you feel you are on the edge of sleep. Repeat as needed.

## IF AWAKE TOO EARLY

If it is within 1-2 hours of your wake-up time, consider starting your day. Do not check your phone or turn on bright lights until you have decided you are up for the day.

## IF YOU STRUGGLE TO GET OUT OF BED

Use the Cozy Nook as the first place you go after you turn off your alarm so that you don't return to your bed.

## DURING THE DAY/YOUR AWAKE TIME

Stay out of your bed. Doing anything in your bed strengthens the association between your bed and 'awake mode'.

COMMON

# QUESTIONS

## No room for a Cozy Nook?

Clear out a corner in your closet or keep a second mattress under your bed to pull out when needed.



## Too much clutter?

Grab a big box, set a timer for 2 minutes, and clear a location for your Cozy Nook by throwing everything into the box. Resist the temptation to sort things. Though a temporary measure, if you clear the location quickly, you'll keep up your momentum to get to the finish line. Go back afterwards when you have time to take care of the items thrown into the box.

## Unable to easily get out of bed?

If physical limitations make it hard for you to get out of bed, set up the other side of your bed as a distinct area to create a differentiation between where you are in 'sleep mode' vs. in 'awake mode'.

## Set the up the Nook & Kit but not using them?

If the initial versions of the Nook & Sleep Kit aren't comfortable, appealing, or accessible enough, it's common to abandon this idea of staying out of bed.

Remember to keep troubleshooting and making improvements until using these tools becomes effortless in the moment.

COMMON

# QUESTIONS

**Why start here? Will it really make a difference?**

While you will likely benefit from other sleep strategies (ex. learning how to relax your body and mind, setting up other healthy sleep habits), setting up a Cozy Nook and a Sleep Kit is a great first step because the time commitment isn't huge but the payoff can be enormous. If I were to suggest just one thing to improve your sleep, this would be it. After sleep is on track, I'm often told this step and cutting back on time awake in bed made the biggest difference.

***What happens if I skip this step?***

It's tempting and very common to rush through or bypass this step but if you don't have a solid, alternate plan, it's hard to be consistent with staying out of bed until you are very sleepy. Then, you miss out on the powerful benefits of retraining yourself to associate your bed with a calm, sleep state. Often, it's impossible to properly tackle insomnia if you do not address this issue.

**What can I expect?**

Once you start spending less time awake in bed, you may notice that it's easier to fall asleep, that you wake up less in the middle of the night, and that you obtain a deeper sleep. You may even find your bed makes you feel sleepy. You can sometimes see this change immediately but, typically, it takes some time for this retraining process to occur and to see the improvements.

