Essential Insomnia Treatment Strategies

The following strategies have been shown to be successful in almost all people who experience insomnia. They may not make your sleep perfect, but they will probably cause some improvement over time in your ability to initiate and maintain sleep.

1. **Sleep Hygiene:** The most important strategy is to **keep a regular sleep and wake schedule** 7 days per week. It is also important to **minimize caffeine** and to **avoid daytime naps**.

2. **Stimulus Control:** Stimulus control consists of the following two techniques, both of which often need to be practiced for at least a few weeks before you see the benefits:
   - *Do not look at a clock* during time when you wish to be asleep
   - *Do not remain in bed if you are awake and not drowsy.* Instead, go to a different room in your home and engage in a quiet, non-stimulating (no TV or computer) activity such as reading. When drowsiness occurs, you may try once again to fall asleep.

3. **Sleep Restriction:** Sleep restriction involves **deliberately reducing your time in bed each night** for a couple of weeks so that you are sleepier when you actually get in bed. This strategy increases your chances of falling asleep promptly and staying asleep and breaks the habit of being awake and frustrated at night. Sleep restriction is a demanding technique to improve insomnia and is intended to be done only short term. As sleep improves, you will gradually lengthen your allowed sleep period.

   Begin a trial of sleep restriction by being in bed only for the following hours:

   (Please complete the sleep log each morning and call my office after trying this for 2 weeks. If you are sleeping better, we’ll lengthen your time allowed in bed by 15 minutes week by week).

4. **Sedative-Hypnotic Medication:** Medications may be helpful in treating insomnia. Unless you have a history of problems with addiction, these medications are unlikely to cause addiction or even be habit-forming. But, while sleeping pills are often quite effective, they seldom will produce the best effect unless you practice all of the above behavioral strategies.

5. **Recommended Reading:** *The Insomnia Answer* by Paul Glovinsky and Arthur Spielman provides an excellent review of insomnia and all the tricks to defeating it.