



## Myths & Associated Consequences

**Myth One: Using marijuana at night will help you sleep:** Long-term marijuana use limits REM sleep, which is a crucial part of the sleep cycle and allows for “immune function repair” (Wilson, 2019). Thus, this may negatively impact overall health and one’s ability to achieve good sleep. Additionally, anxiety can be a short-term side effect of marijuana use which can also inhibit sleep (Wilson, 2019). One other study further confirmed a correlation between poor sleep and marijuana use and found that sleep related marijuana use may also increase ones use over time (Drazdowski et al., 2021).

**Myth Two: Having a couple drinks at night will help you fall and stay asleep:** While alcohol might help induce sleep, it interferes with REM and deep sleep, which disrupts optimal sleep patterns and causes mid sleep awakenings (ASA, 2022). This impedes one’s ability to achieve good, restful sleep, and might sometimes result in an increase in the amount of alcohol used over time. As someone’s tolerance increases, they often need more alcohol to achieve the same desired effect (e.g., sleepiness). Additionally, extreme fatigue related to poor sleep, can cause dangerous situations such as car accidents (ASA, 2022).

**Myth Three: Everyone does it, so it is no big deal:** Not everyone turns to substances to help them sleep. If sleep is continuously an issue, then consulting with your primary care physician is the best first course action as they can help develop a healthy and safe treatment plan. Moreover, along with the risks associated with substance use, poor sleep impairs math skills, memory, and in severe cases can result in hallucinations (ASA, 2022). All these factors can negatively influence physical health and academic performance.

# The Many Myths of Marijuana and Alcohol in Relationship to Sleep

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## A Brief Overview

Sleep issues are common and around 60% of college students report poor quality of sleep (Drazdowski et al., 2021). Moreover, poor sleep can be the result of substance use, including marijuana and alcohol (Volkow, 2020). Consequently, difficulties with sleep can have a tremendous impact on mood and often worsens symptoms related to many mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression. Additionally, sleep deprivation causes a decline in cognition, which impedes one’s ability to function in daily life (Drazdowski et al., 2021).

Our brains need time to rest and repair themselves. We cycle through four stages of non-REM sleep during the night (American Sleep Association [ASA], 2022). Stages 3 and 4 are when we are in the deepest state of sleep, which is referred to as “slow wave sleep” (ASA, 2022). These slow waves are known as delta waves (ASA, 2022). Deep sleep allows our body and cells to recover and promotes better learning and memory (ASA, 2022). REM (rapid eye movement) sleep also occurs throughout the night (ASA, 2022). During REM brain activity increases, and a loss of skeletal muscle tone occurs (except for eye & respiratory muscles), which helps prevent us from acting on our dreams (National Sleep Foundation, 2022). REM sleep is very important as it helps regulate mood, memory, and concentration. During a full night’s sleep, we usually transition through five cycles of non-REM/REM activity. Ideally, the typical adult requires around 7-8 hours of sleep a night (ASA, 2022).

## Articles

[What is Sleep and Why is it Important?](#)

[Mayo Clinic Sleep Tips](#)

[Brain Waves Explained](#)

[What is REM Sleep?](#)

[REM Sleep: Why is it Important?](#)

[Journal of American College Health: College Students using Marijuana to Sleep Relates to Frequency, Problematic Use, and Sleep Problems](#)

[Cleveland Clinic: Why you Should Limit Alcohol Before Bed for Better Sleep](#)

[NIH: Connections Between Sleep and Substance Use Disorders](#)

[Sleep Hygiene](#)

## Benefits of Good Sleep

- Decreases stress levels
- Improves concentration
- Enhances memory
- Better functioning immune system
- More energy
- Improves mood and mental health
- Overall improvement in academics due to less fatigue and better memory and focus
- Increases likelihood of optimal physical health

The University of Arizona, 2022

## Challenge Automatic Thoughts about Sleep

What is the evidence?

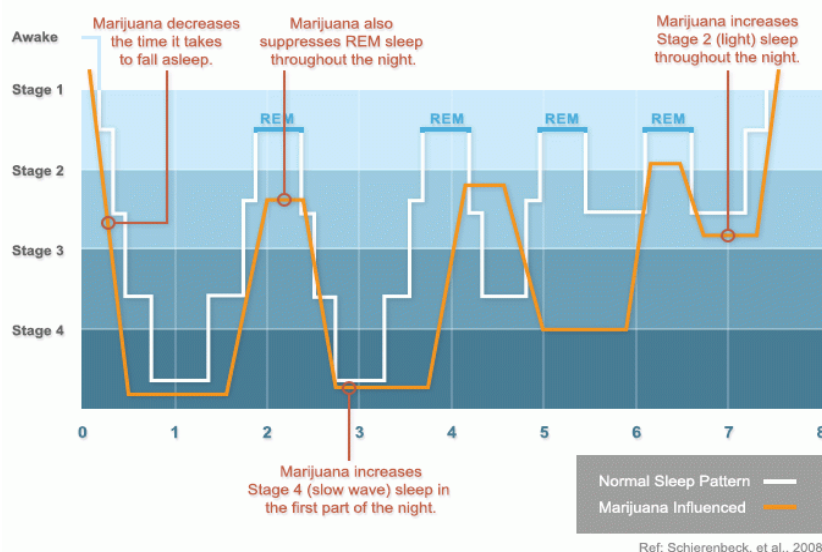
What is the best and worst thing that could happen?

What is the most realistic outcome?

What is the effect of you believing this automatic thought?

Block the thought and reframe → **Example:**  
**Automatic thought** -> "I am never going to sleep", **Reframe** -> "I am struggling, but I am trying to implement positive changes and one night of poor sleep doesn't mean that this will last forever"

## MARIJUANA'S EFFECT ON SLEEP



## Improve Sleep using Sleep Hygiene Interventions

**Identify Negative Thoughts about Sleep & "Discard" Them Prior to Bedtime** – Our thoughts can often keep us up at night. Write down your worries and deal with them in the morning (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Ways to challenge and reframe negative thoughts can also be helpful.

**Use your Bed for Only Sleep** – No tv, eating, or working in bed. You want your brain to associate your bed with only sleep.

**Avoid Daytime Napping** – If you need to nap, ensure that the nap is no longer than 30 minutes as extended daytime napping interferes with sleep (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

**Exercise & Get Outside** – Exercise not only improves overall health, but also improves sleep. However, do not exercise too close to bedtime as this can be stimulating. Additionally, exposing yourself to daylight every day helps your brain establish a circadian rhythm (Sun, 2022).

**Don't Sit in Bed if you Can't Sleep** – If you have been lying awake in bed for longer than 20 minutes, get up and engage in a non-stimulating activity such as reading, and then return to bed (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Avoid screens and bright lights as these can impede your body's ability to produce melatonin (Sun, 2022).

**Assess your Room for Comfort** - Make sure your room is cool, dark, quiet, devoid of screens (no tv/no phone) and is someplace you feel safe and comfortable (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

**Avoid Stimulants, Alcohol, and Marijuana before Bed** – Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and other stimulants at least a few hours before bed (Mayo Clinic, 2022). As mentioned above alcohol and marijuana also disrupt sleep.

**Adhere to a Routine** – Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on the weekends. This allows your body to maintain a circadian rhythm and sleep-wake cycle (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

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