Leahy and Holland (2000), Coren (1996) and Hamilton and Fleming (1989) provide excellent suggestions for good sleep hygiene to promote restful sleep:

**Avoid caffeine and tobacco after 3 pm in the afternoon**
These are stimulants and promote wakefulness. As well, they increase the rate of urine production. Caffeine can simulate anxiety. Alcohol acts to decrease the time to fall asleep but promotes an excess of stages one and two and suppresses the deep sleep of stage four.

**Exercise moderately in the late afternoon or early evening for night time sleep**
Exercise is a good way to get rid of the muscular tension associated with sympathetic nervous system arousal. Exercising promotes deep sleep, especially if it is to the degree that you change your core body temperature. Exercising close to bedtime may act as a stimulant. Exercising in the morning is excellent for fitness but does not seem to have much effect on that night’s sleep.

**Environmental conditions promoting sleep**
The ideal sleeping temperature is around 18 degrees Celsius (64-66 degrees Fahrenheit). A dark room promotes sleep as does a quiet environment. Black out curtains can make a room dark. Perhaps using ear plugs or having a fan on to provide a background noise, thereby masking other noises can help if you are in a noisy situation.

**Use your bed only for sleep and sex**
Insomnia is often the result of increased arousal preceding bedtime and while lying awake in bed. Many who have insomnia use the bed for reading, talking on the phone, and worrying; as a result, the bed is associated with arousal (anxiety). Read or talk on the phone in another room.

**If feeling stressed by the day’s activities, have enough relaxing time to enable the stress hormones to dissipate**
People report that if they are “hyper,” studying hard, or in the fight or flight arousal state they are unable to sleep if they do not allow enough time to relax prior to going to sleep. You may need about an hour to “unwind,” perhaps more time, perhaps less. Find out how much time you need to relax before going to bed. This will prevent a feeling of mental excitement when trying to get to sleep. Watching violent or disturbing shows on TV, e.g., the news, also activates flight or fight responses, so this too is best avoided before bedtime. Avoid anxiety arousal during the hour before bedtime (for instance, avoid arguments and challenging tasks). If you have friends who call late at night, tell them not to call after a specific hour.

**Have a “sleep promoting” snack prior to bedtime if you are having trouble sleeping**
The following foods contain L-tryptophan (an amino acid) which is converted into serotonin, a neurotransmitter than acts to “quiet” one in order for sleep to occur: turkey, cottage cheese, milk, and cashews. Dieting is associated with sleep difficulties. Apparently, people sleep best when they are gaining weight.
Reduce or eliminate liquid intake several hours before bedtime
Sleep is often disturbed by urinary urgency. Avoid heavy foods and liquor. If necessary, consult a nutritionist to assist in planning a change in diet.

Develop regular sleep times
Go to bed and get out of bed at about the same time, regardless of how tired you are. Treat sleep as a circadian rhythm. Going to bed and waking up times should be at the same times for all the days of the week. The sleep cycle needs to be treated with respect. By varying going to sleep times and getting up times, the rhythm is disrupted.

Getting up (waking) times should be at the same time each morning. If you have your sleep rhythm disrupted and want to get back on track quickly, then by getting up at your regular time, you will likely get back on track and be able to sleep at the regular time the next night.

Avoid naps
The best sleep is obtained at night. Taking naps can disrupt your daily sleep rhythm and can confuse your sleep “clock.” If you must nap, then taking a “power” nap for 15 to 30 minutes may refresh you. Some people find taking power naps does not disrupt their night time sleep. Others find it does. Lengthy naps (1-2 hours), often prevent you from getting to sleep at your regular time.

Do not try to fall asleep—this will only increase your frustration and anxiety
Paradoxically, a very effective way of increasing sleep is to practice giving up trying to fall asleep. You can say to yourself, “I’ll give up trying to get to sleep and just concentrate on the relaxing feelings in my body.”

Go to bed only when you feel sleepy. It usually takes up to 20 minutes to fall asleep. If you are lying awake and not able to sleep it may be a good idea to get up and do something relaxing until you start to feel sleepy. Often sleep deprived people [those who have a large sleep debt] will fall asleep very quickly in 5 minutes or less. This may be a sign you are not getting enough sleep on a regular basis. If you are lying awake at night for more than 15 minutes, turn on the light and read or get up and go in to another room.

If you find yourself worrying, write down what you are worried about or things you need to do the next day. Or you may want to write down your negative automatic thoughts and challenge them. For example typical automatic thoughts at night are “I’ll never get to sleep,” “If I don’t get enough sleep, I won’t be able to function,” “I need to get to sleep immediately,” and “I’ll get sick from not getting enough sleep.” The most likely consequence of not getting enough sleep is that you will feel tired and irritable. Although these are uncomfortable inconveniences, they are not catastrophic. If you can’t sleep it is better to at least rest rather than spend the night worrying about getting to sleep.

Keep your regular rituals and routines before bedtime.
This way you will not be nagged by the thought that you have not done what you normally do. Schedule enough time for each night’s sleep. Waking up feeling refreshed, energetic, and able to think clearly is the goal for each day. Sleep deprivation impedes creative mental abilities and acts as an immunosuppressant.

Quiet your mind
Your therapist can teach you relaxation and breathing, which will enhance your restfulness. Try to make your mind go blank. Count backward by threes from 100 or 1,000, as slowly as possible. Visualize a relaxing scene—for example, snow falling on a house in the woods at night. Be patient. Because your disturbed sleep patterns have taken a long time to learn, it may take you a while to unlearn them. Do not expect immediate results.