

Mood

- JoAnn has a terrible time sleeping. She will complain of waking up 'wired' in the middle of the night, or not being able to sleep at all.
- Tom can't face getting out of bed in the morning, he doubts his ability to do anything well, feels his mind has burned out to the point of uselessness and feels hopeless.
- Kelly is irritable and angry. Some of her reactions to everyday things are frightening and she doesn't find humor in anything. Friends shy away from her.
- Dad used to love to go out to eat, now he gets sad at the thought of going out because he can't remember what is on the menu or what he likes to eat.

Assistive technology solutions are available which can soothe, uplift, and calm. These devices fall into the following categories: comforting, light regulating, and sleep aids.

Comforting Aids

Music can be great for calming and diverting attention. There are numerous categories of music from which to select: music to calm captures sounds from nature such as rain, breezes, and waterfalls; period music brings back pleasant thoughts and memories of a person's life, maybe childhood; religious or gospel music; patriotic music or sing-a-long music. Music selections can be purchased at local retail outlets, discount stores, or through catalogs.

Portable devices which produce soothing sounds are also available. The **Sound Soothers®**, for example, is a compact, battery operated AM/FM relaxation system with full radio capabilities as well as an option to select sounds from nature - waves, streams, crickets, frogs, or masking white noise. These easily slip into a pocket for use across environments. The Sound Soother® is also available as a table-top model with the added feature of a **SuperView®** LCD screen for time, date, station identification and visual of the five restful sound environments; ocean waves, summer night sounds, tumbling waters, soft patter of rain, and neutral masking noise. When a change of pace is needed, these two soothing sound systems can provide a calming effect.

For some individuals, talking with another person provides the necessary reassurance. When face-to-face conversation is not possible, the use of an intercom system within the environment can provide that link. This can be done through the creative use of baby monitors or higher-end wireless systems available at electronics stores.

For those distracted or upset by environmental sounds there are **Noise**

Canceling Headphones. These headphones significantly reduce background noise by using two built-in microphones which pick up the environmental noises and feed them to a circuit which analyzes the sound wave pattern and then creates an exact opposite sound wave, thereby canceling both sounds. The headphones feature a slide which allows the user to tailor the amount of active noise cancellation. The headphones may be used alone or with an in-line audio port which allows use with personal stereos.

Relaxation is often enhanced through the use of vibration and massage. There are a variety of massage aids available, from simple vibrators to massage chairs. For example, the **Contour Concept Massager** which falls between these two. It is a light, flexible, portable massager that can be applied against key pressure points easily. It runs on a 9-volt battery and allows both speed and intensity adjustments with a pocket-sized control unit. For those desiring a more intense massage, there is a **10 Motor Massage Mat**. It is a thick contoured piece of foam which can be unfolded on any bed or sofa and plugs into a standard wall outlet. The mat is controlled through a LCD touch pad and has nine pre-programmed massages covering five body zones. In addition to pulsation, there is also a therapeutic heat option available.

Light Regulating Aids

For those who need a gradual cue for rising in the morning, there are devices such as the **Natural Wake-up-to-Light Alarm Clock**. This clock's light slowly starts to glow a half hour before you set wake-up, gradually illuminating the room and becoming brighter and brighter until it is time to get out of bed. As well, it has a sundown mode, which gradually decreases the light's brightness from full intensity to dark.

Individuals who are sensitive to lack of light in the winter months can benefit from light accommodations. To boost sunlight hours, use devices such as the **Horizon Light**. This device simulates the sun's beneficial rays and can be placed on a table or dresser, plugged into AC using a three prong plug. An individual can receive the benefits of light while playing cards, reading, or talking to friends.

Sleep Aids

There is nothing more underrated than a good night's sleep. When falling asleep or staying asleep is difficult try some of these sleep aids. There are devices that block out annoying sounds as a result of traffic or clocks. The **Sleep Sound Generator** is one such device that can help a person relax and fall asleep by producing a gentle whooshing sound. The sound tone and volume is adjustable and the device plugs into a standard wall outlet.

The **Customized Environmental Sound Machine** is an example of more elaborate systems that take blocking out sounds to a new level. This table-top sized device uses digitized and synthesized sound patterns which are

programmable. The users can design their own sleep environments by mixing the 10 base sound selections. Tone and volume are adjustable and a 60 minute timer can be set to automatically turn the device off.

Other options include visual features. The **Dream Light™**, for example, is a sound activated light show within a solid glass sphere. The sound sensitive circuitry in the base of the device activates color LEDs in response to music, voices or room sounds. The colors fade in and out to the rhythm of the relaxing music selected. There is also a night-light setting which just allows the colors to fade in and out, softly lulling an individual to sleep.

Things you can do to make life easier

- Create bright and cheerful environments, use pleasant colors, paintings, and pictures of happy subjects (children, puppies, kittens, humor, sports and personal favorites)
- Use full spectrum or incandescent light bulbs that emit warmer colors
- Open curtains and raise shades to bring in natural light
- Provide activities and choices - “an active mind is a healthy mind”
- Exercise, make it part of everyday. It can be as simple as creating a path in the backyard or around the house and walking it every day
- Purchase or adopt a pet. They make great diversions and can increase a person’s sense of worth through the responsibility of feeding and routine care giving
- Put away valuable and breakable objects. Replace fragile lamps with nonbreakable ones. Soften sharp, hard edges of counters and tables
- Create a special place or room that is safe and comfortable
- Structure and maintain a regular schedule, which includes proper sleep, diet and exercise