TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP

Some individuals suffer with sleep problems after exposure to a traumatic event, or an intense or tiring deployment. They may be unable to fall asleep, unable to remain asleep, wake in the early morning hours and then be unable to go back to sleep. Problems with sleep are actually one of the most common complaints we hear from disaster survivors and responders.

Some tips for helping with sleep problems include:

1. Only go to bed when you are ready to go to sleep. Don’t read, watch TV or engage in other activities when you are trying to tire yourself enough to sleep.
2. Use soothing music to relax you or relaxation tapes that help with cognitive messages that assist in going to sleep.
3. Use sleep balms with relaxing aromas such as lavender that help induce sleep.
4. Try a relaxing tea an hour before sleep, such as chamomile or lavender.
5. Avoid eating (especially sugar) or drinking (especially alcohol) at least 1 hour before retiring.
6. Try massage oils or balms on your feet, hands, calves, and temples to induce sleep.
7. Ask your physician if you might use a vitamin supplement such as valerian root to assist in sleep.

When exposed to the trauma of a disaster where scenes of destruction, injury and even death may be evident, some people might suffer with nightmares and flashbacks during or after a disaster deployment. These symptoms will likely decrease over time as you process your experience and have opportunities to talk to your team leader, buddy, or family member.

Request a debriefing if you want additional assistance or see your physician or therapist if such sleep disturbances persist.