

Sleep disorders such as insomnia have been greatly discussed in the press in recent years, and as research mounts, more and more health outcomes are linked to good quality and quantity of sleep. **Good sleep is a vital component of good health.** As people become more aware of the importance of sleep, many are seeking help. This can be as simple as talking to a primary care provider or can involve seeking the help of a sleep specialist. Sleep professionals, as a specialty, is a growing field and there are many options. Finding the best option can be a difficult but important decision.

The Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine is an organization dedicated to providing quality sleep services and ensuring that patients get appropriate, well-researched interventions to treat sleep disorders. The Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine provides training and practice guidelines to licensed clinicians to ensure patients get the best possible care. As such, the Society feels it needs to weigh in on the practice of “Sleep Coaching.”

Practitioners who are certified in Behavioral Sleep Medicine (or are licensed practitioners with extensive training in Behavioral Sleep Medicine) have met rigorous requirements, are licensed to practice in their profession by State regulatory agencies, and have additional background and training in mental health and sleep health. They must adhere to a Code of Ethics, maintain their certification through ongoing education and training, and provide services that are established through research.

“Sleep Coaches” are consultants who provide education, advice, and support regarding sleep. Many focus on addressing concerns in young children, but others also provide services to adults. Currently, there are no regulatory bodies in the United States that oversee or certify sleep coaches, but there are independent training programs that provide an avenue for the certification of sleep coaches. However, anyone can use the title “Sleep Coach”, even if they have no training or certification. Some of the certification programs require the completion of structured training program and passing an exam, but the requirements to become a sleep coach are not as rigorous as the training and supervision required of licensed clinicians or those certified in Behavioral Sleep Medicine. Sleep coaches may or may not be licensed professionals. There is no guarantee that a sleep coach has the background or training needed to adequately and safely assess and treat the sleep problem.

The Society of Behavior Sleep Medicine, therefore, recommends caution in using “Sleep Coaches” and strongly recommends seeking help through a licensed physician or licensed mental health professional with an established expertise in the field of sleep.

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