12.6: XII Glossary

Circadian rhythms: Body rhythms that direct a wide variety of functions, including wakefulness, body temperature, metabolism, and the release of hormones. They control the timing of sleep, causing individuals to feel sleepy at night and creating a tendency to wake in the morning without an alarm.

Insomnia: A common sleep disorder that causes trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting good quality sleep. Insomnia interferes with daily activities and causes the person to feel unrested or sleepy during the day. Short-term insomnia may be caused by stress or changes in one’s schedule or environment, lasting a few days or weeks. Chronic insomnia occurs three or more nights a week, lasts more than three months, and cannot be fully explained by another health problem or a medicine. Chronic insomnia raises the risk of high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Microsleep: Brief moments of sleep that occur when a person is awake. A person can’t control microsleep and might not be aware of it.

Narcolepsy: An uncommon sleep disorder that causes periods of extreme daytime sleepiness and sudden, brief episodes of deep sleep during the day.

Non-REM sleep: Slow-wave sleep when restoration takes place and the body’s temperature, heart rate, and oxygen consumption decrease.

REM sleep: Rapid eye movement (REM) sleep when heart rate and respiratory rate increase, eyes twitch, and brain activity increases. Dreaming occurs during REM sleep, and muscles become limp to prevent acting out one’s dreams.

Sleep apnea: A common sleep condition that occurs when the upper airway becomes repeatedly blocked during sleep, reducing or completely stopping airflow. If the brain does not send the signals needed to breathe, the condition may be
called central sleep apnea.

**Sleep diary:** A record of the time a person goes to sleep, wakes up, and takes naps each day for 1-2 weeks. Timing of activities such as exercising and drinking caffeine or alcohol are also recorded, as well as feelings of sleepiness throughout the day.

**Sleep study:** A diagnostic test that monitors and records data during a patient’s full night of sleep. A sleep study may be performed at a sleep center or at home with a portable diagnostic device.

**Sleep-wake homeostasis:** The homeostatic sleep drive keeps track of the need for sleep, reminds the body to sleep after a certain time, and regulates sleep intensity. This sleep drive gets stronger every hour a person is awake and causes individuals to sleep longer and more deeply after a period of sleep deprivation.