

Sweet Sleep Right Now

Compiled Tried and Tested Bedtime Tips to a Sound and Restful Sleep

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Introduction

Before we go to the battle and fight sleep deprivation, let me first prepare you and equip you with knowledge on what sleep and sleep deprivation really is.

Importance of Sleep

Having sleep is very important to us. It is very essential because sleep gives us the required energy to live another stressful day. It also gives us the time to rest, relax, and forget our worries and anxieties. Sleep also helps maintain our body healthy and keeps our memory sharp. It is as important as to eating and drinking so we should give extreme attention to our sleeping habits. Without sleep, our body will not function well.

Unfortunately, other people do not get enough sleep. They experience lack of sleep due to too much work; while others undergo sleep disorders that forbid them from getting enough sleep.

The Sleep Process

As we fall asleep, we enter the transition sleep called Stage 1 and begin our first sleep cycle. Within a few minutes we go into our Stage 2 sleep. Stage 2 sleep is where the other three stages come from. Within 15-20 minutes we have gradually evolved into Stage 3 then Stage 4 sleep. Stages 2, 3, 4 are called delta sleep or NREM (non-rapid eye movement) sleep. Our respiration and heart beat slowdown during these 4 stages. Our body also becomes immobile.

After almost half an hour of NREM sleep, our brain goes loco and we go back to stage 2 sleep and then go to REM (rapid eye movement) sleep where our brain becomes very active and our respiration and heart rate increases again. This is the stage where our dreams occur. Our eyes also move in all directions under our eyelids. The REM sleep will happen for only about 10-20 minutes and then goes back to stage 2 again. This marks the end of the first sleep cycle and then starts all over again. As we start all over again we gradually lose our time for NREM sleep and replace it with longer alternating stage 2 and REM sleep and by the final sleep cycle, we will spend about half our time in stage 2 sleep and half in REM sleep. Sleep normally ends after six cycles.

Causes of Sleep Deprivation

There are different causes of sleep deprivation. Somniphobia, (fear of sleeping) anxiety or stress, environment noises, night shifts, and traveling from place to place can cause sleep deprivation. But the most common and well-known cause of sleep deprivation are sleep disorders, and the best known sleep disorder is insomnia.

Sleep disorders cause lack of sleep and excessive sleepiness (normally occurs during the day) too. However excessive sleepiness caused by sleep disorders is not healthy. They do not have good quality like the sleep normal persons have.

There are different types of sleep disorders:

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a disorder that involves the respiratory system. This sleep disorder is characterized by troubled breathing and this usually comes with loud snoring. Individuals who have this kind of sleep disorder normally experience this period of breathlessness at night. They do not get sufficient oxygen that their body needs to function normally. Sleep apnea may also be associated to abnormality in heartbeat or high blood pressure. Sleep apnea also gets worse as you grow older.

There are three types of sleep apnea and they are:

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

This is the most common among the 3 types. It is usually caused by a hindrance or blockade in the throat which is the passageway of oxygen. Sleep positions or bed patterns may cause this kind of sleeping disorder. Other factors may also cause this disorder like excess fat or being obese, inheritance, and too much alcohol intake before going to sleep.

Central Sleep Apnea

The second type of sleep apnea, central sleep apnea is caused by some irregularities or abnormalities in the part of the brain that controls our breathing. Usually, people with sleep apnea

wake up at night for brief periods and breathe. Normally, they do not remember these brief periods when they wake up.

Mixed Sleep Apnea

As the name suggests, the person experiences both obstructive sleep apnea and central sleep apnea.

A person may already have sleep apnea if he or she experiences the following:

- Loud snoring
- Frequent urination at night
- Waking up at night with the sensation of being choked
- Waking up sweating
- Waking up at night panting for air

Narcolepsy

Narcolepsy is a situation where the person feels sleepy every time, even at an unanticipated time and place. It is frequently irregular and sudden. Narcoleptics also experience unmanageable sleep (also known as 'micro sleeps'). They also lose control of their muscles. This event of losing control of your muscle is called cataplexy. In general, a person attacked by cataplexy collapses and

undergoes sudden rush of emotion. Narcoleptics may also suffer from figment of imagination or hallucinations when they wake up.

One property of narcolepsy is that it interrupts the Rapid Eye Movement (REM) Sleep (also called dream sleep) untimely. During this stage of sleep, our body becomes tranquil and our brain becomes energetic and our eyes move hastily under our eyelids in all directions (see The Sleep Stages section for further details). Normal people who don't have narcolepsy experience REM sleep when they have been asleep or sleep has been in progress for quite some time. But on the other hand, people who are narcoleptic experience REM sleep even if they are awake.

Some symptoms of narcolepsy include:

- Sleep paralysis
- Hallucinations
- Excessive feeling of sleepiness during the day
- Falling asleep even if you don't want to

Somnambulism

Another kind of sleep disorder is somnambulism. It is also known as sleepwalking. Somnambulism is a sleep disorder that affects children from age's four to twelve. Adults may also be affected by this kind of sleep disorder. It is a disorder wherein the sleeper stands up, walks, and do chores like ordinary awake people. Somnambulists commonly take out actions, such as looking

for someone or something, that reveal stressful events. Sleepwalking also comes with sleep talking. It is quite puzzling in the sense that the individual is awake enough to do ordinary tasks, but is not completely conscious of them. He doesn't even remember what he did during this period of sleepwalking

Generally, sleepwalking happens to a person during his or her deep sleep or the deep non-REM sleep. Although incidents of sleepwalking are short and not hazardous, some cases might engage in inflicting self-injury which will pose troubles or danger for the person sleepwalking.

Insomnia

Insomnia never comes to a man who has to get up at six o'clock

Insomnia only troubles those who can sleep any time.

- Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915)

The most common of all sleep disorders is insomnia. Many people experience insomnia where they do not get enough sleep and rest.

Insomnia is a condition where the person has a problem in sleeping. That person experiences complexity in establishing sleep. The person also finds it hard to stay asleep. Insomnia is often used in suggesting other kinds of sleep deprivation including circadian disorders, sleep

apnea, narcolepsy, and others. Many people suffer from insomnia and are dispossessed of the benefits and welfare of sleeping.

Insomnia can be a symptom of other sleep disorders or other medical or psychological/psychiatric problems, and can often be treated. When insomnia symptoms occur more than a few times a week and impact a person's daytime functions, the symptoms should be discussed with a doctor or other health care provider.

There are three types of insomnia and they are:

Transient Insomnia

This type of insomnia is typically caused by excitement or stress and happens for a few nights only. This kind of insomnia is caused by acute stress, emotional problems, etc. causing emotional anxiety. A vigorous exercise before bedtime or poor health can also temporarily disturb sleep.

Short-term Insomnia

As the name suggests, this type of insomnia is described as insomnia that occurs for only a short period of time. It is believed that this type of insomnia is caused by stress.

Chronic Insomnia

The worst of the three types, this type of insomnia is characterized by poor sleep every night. It is also more compound and frequently results from a mixture of factors, as well as basic physical or mental disorders

Effects of Sleep Deprivation

The feeling of no sleep starts turning the body and the skull into a dried-out husk inside with a sour grease smoke like a tenement fire curdling in the brain pan.

- Tom Wolfe (1930 -)

All of the above mentioned disorders direct to one thing and that is sleep deficiency. Sleep deprivation is not good for our body. We require sleep in order to rejuvenate and to be able to feel refreshed and ready for a new day.

Behavioral Effects

Sleep deprivation has numerous negative effects. It may break our sleep neurons due to long times of sleeplessness causing it to malfunction. This will result to bad conduct or bad interaction or bad speech towards others.

Studies also illustrate that people deprived of sleep experience difficulties in thinking imaginative thoughts or terms. That person also suffers difficulties in delivering his or her declarations well. Without sleep, our brains grow weaker, and our actions and deeds will be affected.

Physical and Other Dangers

Lack of sleep also poses dangers to ones body. As we have learned earlier, lack of sleep damages the brain and causes behavioral damages and because our brain controls the other functions in our body, sleep deprivation may also damage them. Studies also show that people who lack sleep gets sick more often. Also, sleep deprived persons are prone to accidents (particularly car accidents). I have found out in the internet that around 200,000 accidents are caused by sleeping drivers on their sleeping wheels.

The person who experiences sleep deprivation may also suffer financially. Because the brain (again) is affected, the person produces low-quality work. This may cause him to be kicked out of office or fired by his boss.

Sleep deprivation may also affect the person mentally. Studies shows that people who don't get enough sleep experience difficulties in remembering things and expressing their thoughts creatively.

Researches also suggest that people who lack sleep seem to age quicker than those who get enough sleep.

Sleep Tips for Better Sleep

It's Bedtime!!!

Most individuals have the capacity of waking up the same time each day. Have you ever wondered how this came to happen?

That's because people are creatures of habit. You may have heard of this before and yes, it's true. However, there is a deeper underlying reason why we wake up and doze off at almost the same time everyday.

It's because of our body temperature rhythm. Our body temperature rises and falls the same time each day, regardless of when you sleep. Do you know that even when you go out partying and sleep at 2:00 a.m. on a Friday night, you would most probably wake up at the same normal time as you always did? You will also feel sleepy at the same time the next day.

That's why it is important to have a consistent bedtime schedule. If you don't, you'll ruin your own body clock. You can't "recover" for sleep you lose during the night by waking up much later in the morning (or even in the afternoon for some people). This will result in fatigue, restlessness, and even irritability.

The SOWS Trick

The trick is simple, the person is typically advised to set off to bed only when sleepy. If unable to fall asleep, the person is told to get up, hang about until sleepy, and then go back to bed. Later on the person's body will be taught to relate the bed and bed time with sleep. SOWS is a mnemonic that stands for the phrase "Sleep Only When Sleepy".

Sleep Rituals

Do you have any particular habit before going to sleep? For example, you read a book or meditate. For most people, certain activities correlate or connect something heard, seen, touch, smelled, or tasted with a particular memory or representation. These are called anchors.

Take this case: Every time before you go to sleep, you listen to your favorite classical tune. Then the day came when you have to go on a business trip and you forgot to bring the classical tape with you. Night comes and you simply could not get yourself to sleep without listening to that music first. That classical melody is the anchor. It signals your brain to prepare for dreamland.

Anchors could be a very powerful instrument to put you to sleep. Some people could not get to sleep without having a midnight snack. Having a light snack may have a sedative effect and is not bad at all. But eating too much before going to slumber may affect the quality of your sleep. Let us discuss more about this topic later as we go on.

There are certain anchors that you do not want to be associated with sleep. Avoid watching TV in bed, because it can stimulate your senses. Do not make your bedroom an office, because you might associate your work with sleeping time. As a general rule, your bedroom is designed only for sleep.

Rrringgg!!! Rrringgg!!!

Researchers prove that using an alarm clock to wake you up is not good. They say that alarm clocks used to wake people disrupt the sleep cycle and keeps the sleeper from having a complete, natural, and high quality sleep. The use of alarm clock also promotes sleep problems for the following days. Instead of using alarm clocks, researchers suggest dawn stimulation devices which are way more effective on producing healthy sleep.

The Flower Therapy

Vervain, a plant naturalized as a weed has a very calming essence is given to people with very strong feelings. This kind of personality is linked with sleep apnea which causes sleep problems. When these people use Vervain, it seems that their problems are solved including sleep problems. Vervain is also called herb of the cross.

Weight Control

Being a widely spread health problem in the world, obesity can cause many health problems like heart diseases, gall bladder related disease, and certain types of cancer. Too much

weight can also cause problems in sleeping like sleep apnea. Like we have discussed earlier, sleep apnea produces low-quality sleep which poses certain problems.

There are many causes of obesity. Some of them are the following

- Metabolic Rate
- Genetic Makeup
- Genes
- Lifestyle

You can cure your obesity by doing the following:

- Applying a low-calorie but nutritionally balanced diet
- Doing exercises
- Having weight-loss treatments
- Surgery (only for those extremely obese)

Correct Posture

Correct posture also contributes to a good night sleep. Always ensure that you're comfortable with your sleeping posture. If possible, sleep on your back or sideways. Try to avoid sleeping on your front because it could strain your neck, back, and vital organs. Get a bed that does

not sag, and is neither too hard nor too soft. (Try this site and see what your sleeping positions mean: <http://www.humorpictures.com/sleep/sleep1.htm>)

No TV's, and Reading Materials

Some people say that reading a detective story or some such escapist book helps put them to sleep.

I have found out why the statement mentioned above never works. The reason is that whatever we watch on TV, or whatever the book we read is, our minds are still being stirred and activated. And an active mind along with anxiety and stress is what keeps us awake. It's all those thoughts in our head we have to get rid of before we can get to sleep. And if you must read something try to hang around at least one-half hour before going to bed after reading or watching television.

The Benefits of a Warm Shower

A nice warm shower can relieve stress and relax your system. Couple that with low light and some soothing music, and you'll feel much better when you go to sleep. You may even add some herbs like lavender, chamomile, or passion flower for a more pleasant experience.

You must take this warm bath a couple of hours before you go to bed. The reason is that it will increase your body temperature and arouse your senses. Therefore, you must allow your body temperature to have enough time to lower by bedtime.

Taking Naps

Many people say that taking naps can be detrimental to your sleeping system and could lead to insomnia. It is true if you don't know the proper way of taking a nap. Let me explain and remind you of the sleep stages discussed earlier.

On stages 1 and 2, our mind goes into a creative and relaxed state. Our blood pressure and breathing drops slightly, and we are still half conscious and very prone to waking up.

On stages 3 and 4, our heart rate and respiration drops at its lowest point. This is the moment when blood travels to our muscles to recharge and repair any damage.

Stage 5 is what is commonly called REM sleep. Most of the time, people who are in this stage are dreaming. This is also the moment when most of our daytime experiences and knowledge gained are absorbed by our brain. Do you know babies spend around half of their sleeping time on REM sleep? That's how they acquire the ability to quickly pick-up and learn new information.

So what does this data have to do with taking naps?

When we reach deep sleep (stage 3 or the non-REM sleep), it would be very difficult for us to wake up and even if we do get up, we will feel lightheaded and weak. We don't get the necessary energy a good sleep gives us.

So when taking afternoon naps, make sure you don't reach this stage. The nap should take around 15 minutes to half an hour only. The maximum is 45 minutes. During this period, we are half conscious and still aware of our surroundings. After that duration, we will enter deep sleep so make sure not to exceed the limit. We don't want to feel sluggish throughout the day and we certainly don't want to ruin our sleep system.

The Bedroom Atmosphere

To have a good night's sleep, it is necessary that your environment fosters the correct conditions.

The ambiance of your bedroom should match up to your comfort level. When your room is either too hot or too cold, your body will adjust by lowering or raising your body temperature; hence, you may have difficulty getting to sleep.

Always make sure that your bed is large enough to accommodate you and your partner. Make sure that it is not too soft nor too sturdy. Also remember to keep your bedroom well

ventilated and free from noises. Also keep in mind that the bedroom is only a place for sleeping. Also try to lessen light by using window blinds or curtains.

If noises prevent you from dozing off, consider wearing earplugs. You may also use “non-disturbing” sounds such as that coming out from an air conditioner to cover up offending noises. You may also listen to classical music, as they can calm your nerves and put you in a state of relaxation.

Eastern Meditation

Try this technique which is an ancient Eastern meditation.

- Lie on your back with your hands behind your head with your fingers interlocked, and your palms cupping the back of your head and get as relaxed as possible.
- Put your thumbs at the back of your ears so that you are blocking the entrance to your ear.
- Slump down gently and pay attention to a high-pitched hum that you will slowly hear in your head.
- Lie down for 10 to 15 minutes and focus on that sound. Then go to sleeping position and go to sleep.

Healthy and Active Lifestyle

Did you know that most people who have sleep problems have an inactive lifestyle?

Researches reveal two findings about exercise (applicable to insomniacs).

- Insomniacs have more inactive lives than high-quality sleepers. The absence of physical activity can promote insomnia by inhibiting the daily rise and fall of the body-temperature rhythm. As a result, many people get caught in a cycle of insomnia, less energy and physical activity, and worsened insomnia.
- Exercise enhances sleep by creating a significant rise in body temperature, followed by a compensatory drop a few hours later. The fall in body warmth, which endures for two to four hours after exercise, makes it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Insomniacs can truly profit from a good exercise program. Not only will it encourage good overall health, most notable would be the increased supply of oxygen to our lungs, blood, and entire body; but it will also cause a sedative and soothing effect to the body when we go to sleep at night.

The reason behind all this?

Exercise causes our body temperature to augment rapidly, and it will remain at a high rate even until the end of the day. That means you'll stay lively and wide awake for a longer period of time.

But when it's bedtime, the drop in body temperature will also become more intense and will stay that way longer. A decrease in temperature means deeper, additional comfort, and higher

quality sleep. That's why day by day exercise is necessary to prevent our body temperature from maintaining at the same level.

Do not, however, exercise intensely late at night. Try to do it six hours before your assigned bedtime. Your body temperature will not have a chance to decrease low enough when you go to sleep, that's why it is recommended to exercise in the late afternoon many hours before you go to sleep.

Aerobic exercises are the most excellent exercises in combating wakefulness because these exercises boost the quantity of oxygen that reaches the blood and other parts of our body. Some examples of aerobic exercises are:

- Jogging
- Swimming
- Riding a bicycle
- Dancing
- Jumping Rope
- Step Aerobics
- Using a treadmill
- Walking

A mild workout for fifteen to twenty minutes a day, four days a week, will be enough for you to feel the benefits. Warm up before doing the exercises and cool down your body after doing it so your muscles will not be stressed nor sprained nor experience any injury.

For a lot of people, the perfect time to work out is early in the morning. But for fighting insomnia, the greatest time to do exercises is at the end of the day or in the near the beginning of evening. If possible, avoid exercise in the late evening or just earlier than going to bed. Exercise is motivating the body which makes it active and it can take sometime for your muscles and circulatory system to relax once more after a forceful workout.

No Smoking Allowed

Avoid nicotine, at least in the evening if not altogether, because smokers tend to sleep very lightly and wake up early due to nicotine withdrawal. While at low doses nicotine tends to act as a sedative, at high doses it causes arousal during sleep.

Smoking can have unfavorable effects on your body by signaling it to wake up in the middle of the night, as your body's want for nicotine increases toward daybreak hours. It also has many negative effects on your body, so why smoke?

Nicotine also produces quicker heart rate and increases your stress hormones, aside from giving you lung diseases.

Relaxation Therapies

A variety of relaxation therapies are helpful for inducing sleep. It is because these therapies get rid of or diminish anxiety and body tension causing the muscles to loosen up and relax.

The following are some techniques that I have found:

Relaxation Technique #1: Progressive Relaxation

You better record the instructions so you don't have to focus on remembering them. Record it with a short pause after each sentence so that you have time to actually do what is said and have time to relax.

The instructions are:

Lie down, relax, close your eyes, and listen.

- Feel your feet. Feel the weight of your feet. Feel your feet relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your lower legs. Feel the weight of your lower legs. Feel your lower legs relax and sink into the bed.

- Feel your knees. Feel the weight of your knees. Feel your knees relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your upper legs. Feel the weight of your upper legs. Feel your upper legs relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your hands. Feel the weight of your hands. Feel your hands relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your lower arms. Feel the weight of your lower arms. Feel your lower arms relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your elbows. Feel the weight of your elbows. Feel your elbows relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your upper arms. Feel the weight of your upper arms. Feel your upper arms relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your buttocks. Feel the weight of your buttocks. Feel your buttocks relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your back. Feel the weight of your back. Feel your back relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your pelvic and belly area. Feel the weight of your pelvic and belly area. Feel your pelvic and belly area relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your chest. Feel the weight of your chest. Feel your chest relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your shoulders. Feel the weight of your shoulders. Feel your shoulders relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your neck, both front and back. Feel the weight of your neck. Feel your neck relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your skull. Feel the weight of your skull. Feel your skull relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your mouth. Feel any tension in your mouth. Feel your mouth relax and any tension slide off into the bed.

- Feel your eyes. Feel any tension in your eyes. Feel your eyes relax and any tension slide off into the bed.
- Feel your entire face. Feel any tension in your face. Feel your face relax and let any tension slide off into the bed.
- Mentally scan your body. If you find any place that's still tense, relax it and let it sink into the bed.

Relaxation Technique #2: Breathing Deeply

By breathing deeply we are given the benefit of having enough oxygen to give to all parts of our body which energizes and invigorates everything in our body. This technique uses the entire lungs for breathing.

- Lie down on your back.
- Gradually relax your body, first with your feet and then every part of your body until you have relaxed your face and scalp.
- See to it that you have relaxed every part of your body. If not, relax it.
- Bit by bit, begin to inhale; first filling your lower belly, then your tummy, and then your upper body and the top of your lungs. Hold for a second or two, and then start to breathe out. Empty your lungs from the bottom up to the top.
- Do this exercise for 4 or 5 minutes. Do it in a relaxed, peaceful manner. Do not force it.

- After a while, imagine that you are resting on a warm, gentle ocean. The sun is shining peacefully on your body. Imagine that you rise on the gentle swells of the water as you inhale, and that you slowly descend as you exhale.
- Continue this relaxing breathing as long as you wish (hopefully until you fall asleep).

This breathing exercise is normally effective when you do it after Progressive Relaxation if you haven't fallen asleep doing relaxation technique #1.

Relaxation Technique #3: Wiggle Your Toes!!!

There are various drinks, methods, herbal teas, techniques that can relax the body. Toe wiggling is also like them. Toe wiggling can help you relax your body and your mind together (as eastern sciences say).

When you do this exercise, you:

- Lie on your back
- Wiggle your toes up and down 12 times, wiggling the toes of both feet at the same time.

This will relax your entire body, inside and out.

How does it work? As stated by the science of Reflexology, which has been around in other civilizations for thousands of years and also aims to relax your joints and muscles, your feet are a kind of master control panel for the rest of your body. "Meridians" in the body, which are those

channels of energy treated by acupuncture, end up in the feet. So the extremity of those meridians in your feet attach with every organ and every part of your whole body.

At the time you wiggle your toes, you are motivating or activating your body and thus relaxing your entire body. It is because you can be invigorated and lightened up at this same time. This is done by just a matter of the quality of that energy. If the energy flows without restraint and efficiently, you will experience a relaxing and comfortable effect. If the energy flow in your body is constrained or impassable, you will feel tense. The technique toe wiggling helps to bring about a relaxing, free-flowing energy.

Relax and Lighten up

Worries and anxieties will absolutely prevent you from getting a good night's sleep. Forget everything that's bugging you, at least for the night. There is a time for accepted wisdom on these things, but bedtime is your moment for rest and relaxation.

Yes, I know it might be very difficult to put your worries aside. Here are some great tips to help you unwind and relax:

Put all your worries, anxieties, or problems in writing. By doing this, you are subconsciously transferring them into a piece of paper and giving your mind a break.

Turn over in your mind and use imagery. Follow these steps:

Step 1: Get a comfortable & quiet place to rest.

Step 2: Relax your whole body. Command every part of your body to relax starting from your feet up to your head.

Step 3: Count back slowly from 20 to 1, where in each count you relax deeper & deeper. Upon reaching 1, you are completely relaxed.

Step 4: Now envision a person or an object that represents your problem, for instance – your boss. Picture him in your mind as someone who obeys your every order. You are now in full command and whatever you say; your boss will just smile and do your every command. Now isn't that a wonderful experience? Of course, you can also think of objects, like a rock. Imagine your worries being sucked up by that rock. Then picture in your mind that you are crushing it with all your might. Doesn't that feel good? Now get imaginative and use your mind's eye.

Step 5: Then after about 10 to 20 minutes of continuous visualization, count slowly from 1 to 20. Upon counting, slowly be aware of your surroundings. Feel refreshed & invigorated after doing this exercise.

Go over this exercise for as long as you're having sleep troubles caused by worries and anxieties.

Other Methods:

- Visualize hearing or seeing your thoughts in slow motion.

- Envision your thoughts as if they're being written down on a piece of paper or blackboard. See yourself erasing them until they have completely vanished from your sight.
- If you cannot get your thoughts out of your mind, focus on something else that is less strenuous. Imagine yourself resting over peaceful scenery of mountains, trees, and rivers.
- Don't stay in bed when you can't get to sleep. Sounds kind of ironic, but it's true. The more you move around helplessly in bed and the more you get frustrated, the more difficult it would be for you to doze off. You won't be able to relax immediately when you're in this condition. So the best thing to do is to jump out of bed, and do something else like reading a good book. You'll eventually get back into relaxation mode and will be able to sleep much faster.

Here's an interesting article that will further familiarize you with imagery and visualization.

How to Optimize the Awesome Power of Thoughts and Imagination

By Michael Lee, CPA

<<< Have you encountered a time when you were in a traffic jam and was running late for an important meeting? Did you stay calm and focused? Or did your mind wander into the dark side of the impending consequences that may occur?

If you're always picturing people getting mad at you and thinking of negative outcomes, then your body suffers as well. You may experience chest pains, anxiety disorders, indigestion, and other health problems. Why worry when you can't do anything about the situation? Moreover,

you don't even know yet what will happen yet. Both good and bad things happen unexpectedly. Why bother to worry? It's just not worth it. Your mind directly influences your body's capabilities and reactions; so if you always project negative thoughts and images in your mind, your body suffers as well. But if you always think of positive and enthusiastic stuffs, your body will react positively too.

The mind is an absolute powerhouse, a dream granter, and goal achiever, all rolled into one. But do you know how to optimize it for best performance? Many times we've heard people say that "If you think you can or you can't, you're right."

That is so true. But do you know exactly how to use your thoughts in reaching what you desire to achieve?

They say affirmations work. Yes, they do. But the results might be minimal and might not turn out according to your expectations.

Do you want to know a method that is much more powerful? What I'm going to tell you is a technique that is so effective in itself; that if you combine it with affirmations, then you possess one of the deadliest combos of self-improvement.

Want to know the secret? Here it is.

Visualize images. It's as simple as that. Our mind communicates with our body using images. You know that the thought of people getting angry with you can negatively affect your health. Otherwise, picturing yourself relaxing at your favorite vacation spot can ease some of your stress.

Take this exercise.

Imagine the juiciest whole piece of fried chicken right in front of you. You can smell its tempting aroma. You sliced it into pieces and heard the crispy crunching sound. Picture yourself taking a large bite and enjoying the gastronomic experience. Did that made your mouth water?

Did that made you hungry?

Images are very powerful and can be used to improve your health, attain your goals, and achieve anything that you put your mind into. For instance, you're a burn victim. You have a wound that is quite agonizing. Don't just say, "Hey, burn wound. Get out of my skin." Picture it in your mind getting smaller and smaller. Visualize it melting and vanishing into thin air.

You may imagine the wound itself healing miraculously, or you may designate any object of your choice to represent that wound. For example, you visualize a black stone as a symbol of your illness. Imagine that object shrinking and disintegrating slowly. As you're thinking of this, feel your wound and all negative forces simultaneously going along with the action of the black stone. Let them become smaller and smaller until they have ceased to exist.

So which technique is better - imagining the real thing or assigning a representational object to it? It all depends on you. Pick and apply the method that you are more comfortable with, the one that you are more inclined to think and visualize upon.

But it's not as easy as you think. Practice makes perfect. One way you can optimize the power of imagination is by becoming more observant and meticulous. If you're going to use a certain flower in your visualization, go to the park and become a keen observer of that flower.

Touch it. Smell it. Feel its texture. The more senses involved, the more powerful your visualization will become. Visualization can be a very powerful tool in getting what you want in life. Practice and apply it often. You'll be amazed at the results. >>>

Use visualizations properly. Your mind might wander off from a pleasant experience to a disturbing one, and this will hamper a good and sound sleep. Use imagery to relax yourself, and then empty your mind of all thoughts when it's time for slumber. Don't force yourself to sleep because the more pressure you put on yourself, the more difficult it is to relax. Some people would always look at their clock and this would make them even more pissed off and anxious. The best thing to do is just to relax and to let sleep come by itself.

The Significance of Water

Water plays a very significant role in our sleeping course. Our body is mostly made up of water, and it will not function well if there is insufficient supply of it in our system.

Did you know that our body losses 10 to 12 cups of water in a day? So when we are unable to replace the water we lost, our blood clusters together and it would be powerless to carry an adequate amount of oxygen to all parts of our body. You will feel frail. You will not be able to ponder or think well. Your energy level would be at minimum. Worst of all, it would lower your body's resistance against stress, sickness, or diseases as a result of a weak immune system.

Some people are not taking dehydration seriously. They will only drink if they are thirsty. This should not be the case. Some of them would even mistake their body's urge to drink for hunger.

Now how does water affect your sleep?

If your body is dehydrated, blood flow to your fundamental organs would dwindle during sleep.

If your body has satisfactory water in its system, it will focus on giving you better and deeper sleep because it will exert less effort in digesting food you've eaten throughout the day. Furthermore, having an adequate amount of water in your body helps normalize your body temperature rhythm. It would then give you more energy during the day, and would allow you to sleep thoroughly like a baby at night.

So how many glasses of water should you drink all the way through the day? Eight glasses ought to be enough, even though you should have more fluid intake during the hot summer months or when you are engaged in any sort of movement that makes you sweat a lot.

Drink Milk

Consuming hot milk before bedtime would produce a calming effect to your body. But of course, you might want to do it around one hour before sleeping, so that you won't wake up in the middle of the night with a full bladder.

Stay Away!!!

The following are drinks that you should stay away from:

Fermented Beverages

Many people have the belief that alcohol can help make you dizzy and sleepy. So if they suffer from insomnia, they just order a couple of beers to help them get to sleep. Bad idea! Yes, alcohol may actually put you to sleep, but your sleep will be light and shallow (in other words, of low quality). You might have nightmares and you will have the tendency to wake up in the middle of the night (with an aching head, a full bladder, or stomach pain) because your system is cleansing itself of the alcohol. You will feel dehydrated because of the alcohol's drying elements. Worse, you will have a difficult time to get back to sleep once the sedative effect of the alcohol wears off.

So don't drink (alcohol) if you're aiming for a good night's sleep. But a little dose on those special occasions couldn't be that bad. 😊

Drinks with caffeine

These include coffees, colas, non-herbal teas, and chocolate drinks. If you're going to drink at all, make sure you do it at least 5 hours before going to sleep so that the awakening effect would have sufficient time to wear off. Caffeine has the same effect as that of alcohol in the sense that they would both wake you up frequently in the middle of the night, and would prevent you from getting back to dreamland.

Carbonated drinks

Try to avoid soft drinks because it may cause uneasiness and bloating of your tummy, causing discomfort when you sleep.

Munchies That Help

What you consume and drink throughout the day plays a very important role on how fine and on how deep you snooze at night

There are certain foods to watch out for if you want to sleep soundly. Avoid fats, sugar, spicy foods, and preservatives. They make your digestive system work harder; hence, your body would not be able to focus on giving you better sleep.

Avoid having a heavy meal before going to bed. If you tend to “eat more than you can chew,” you will feel lightheaded. Your body would not be able to digest everything properly and this would hamper your sleep. You must take your last meal of the day around 3 to 4 hours before dozing off. What if you went hungry before going to bed? A light snack (biscuit or small sandwich) would not hurt. You’ll get to sleep easier if you’re not hungry or if you feel comfortable.

As basic as it may seem, but eating healthy and nutritious foods and maintaining a well-balanced diet would do great wonders for your sleep system. Eat foods that are easily digestible like fruits and vegetables. Complex carbohydrates and protein-rich foods would do just fine. You may also want to substitute meat products for their healthier alternatives. For instance, you can make a tuna burger instead of a hamburger.

Be careful with what you eat. Some people have allergic reactions to the food they consume. It may significantly affect their moods and way of thinking. It may disrupt their normal sleep pattern in the process. Below is a list of foods that may trigger allergic reactions:

- Chocolate
- Nuts
- Milk, cheese, and other dairy products
- Chicken
- Egg

- Corn
- Wheat
- Shellfish like crab, shrimp, etc.
- Strawberry
- Alcoholic drinks

Stay Away from Allergies

Allergies other than food may also disrupt your normal sleep process. Here are other tips to overcome allergies:

- Avoid being exposed to allergens. If you're allergic to flowers, try not to get near them.
- Take a warm bath. By doing this, you may wash off pollen and other allergy-causing substances from your body. It will also allow your blood to circulate properly. Furthermore, it will relax you to enhance a good night's sleep.
- Breathe clean air. Stay away from sources of air pollution. In case you really have to go out into the smog, you may also wear a mask to filter out harmful pollutants.
- When cleaning your house, use a damp cloth (to contain the dust) instead of feather dusters which tend to spread the dust around. If it's not necessary, don't dust at all or let someone else do the job.
- Replace your bed cover often. Dirt and dust mite could accumulate on it, resulting in allergic reactions and sleep discomfort.

- Bathe your pet often. By washing your pet in warm water, you significantly reduce the quantity of allergens in your pet's fur.
- Rinse well. Make sure that all traces of detergents and laundry soaps are rinsed off from your clothes.

Food Nutrients

Vitamins and minerals are necessary components of a healthy sleep system. You may get surprised, but your daily intake of vitamins and minerals could significantly affect the quality of your sleep. Take note of the most common ones below and learn how much you should be consuming to help you sleep like a baby.

Vitamin B5

This vitamin helps relieve stress, tension, and anxiety. And you know that the more relaxed your body is, the more soundly you will sleep.

Suggested daily intake: 500 mg.

Foods containing Vitamin B5: banana, wheat germ, whole wheat bread, tuna, and peanut.

Vitamin B6

Also known as Pyridoxine, Vitamin B6 is a coenzyme of amino acid metabolism. It is required to produce serotonin which is needed for the production of melatonin hormones. These hormones are essentially needed to help you sleep well.

Suggested daily intake: 50 to 100 mg.

Foods containing Vitamin B6: whole grain cereals, soybeans, wheat germ, peanut, corn, olive, and nutritional yeast mixed into juice drinks.

Vitamin B12

This vitamin is also known as Cobalamine. Deficiency could lead to weakness, confusion, memory loss, and even anemia.

Suggested daily intake: 25 mg.

Foods containing Vitamin B12: fish, eggs, milk, cheese, meat, banana, peanut, whole grain bread, and wheat germ.

Calcium

No wonder your Mom tells you to drink hot milk before bedtime. Not only does calcium helps in strengthening your teeth and bones, it also aids your body in attaining a state of relaxation. Calcium also soothes your nerves. Lack of calcium in your body can cause wakefulness and restlessness.

Suggested daily intake: 600 mg.

Foods containing calcium: milk, soybeans, leafy vegetables, cheese, egg yolk, and ice cream.

Magnesium

Low intake of magnesium can cause anxiety and nervousness, therefore causing sleep disturbance.

Suggested daily intake: 250g

Foods containing calcium: milk, meat, legumes, almonds, cashew, wheat bran, and cereal.

Copper

Shortage in copper may cause sleeplessness for females experiencing menopause. For some, it may also cause anemia.

Suggested daily intake: 1 to 2 mg.

Foods containing calcium: meat, whole grains, wheat bran, corn, legumes, oatmeal, oyster, fish, and lobster.

Folic Acid

Lack of folic acid in your body may also contribute to insomnia.

Suggested daily intake: 400micrograms

Foods containing calcium: leafy vegetables, soy beans, legumes, sardines, salmon, chicken and orange juice.

Natural Alternatives

Honey can produce a relaxing effect on your body. When mixed with milk or herbal tea, it is an excellent sleep-inducing drink.

Hops may have a sedative effect. But don't take alcoholic drinks, even though they may contain hops. The alcohol ingredient will wake you up in the middle of the night and will prevent you from getting back to sleep.

Chamomile tea made from dried flowers and leaves can give you extra comfort and relaxation. One significant element of chamomile is called chrysin. This helps prop up quality

sleep. It may also reduce the swelling caused by your allergies. For most excellent results, drink chamomile tea 45 minutes to one hour earlier than bedtime.

Another substitute for chamomile is passion flower, as it also contains chrysin.

Sleeping Pills

Resorting to sleeping pills may not be such a good idea. Although they might help in getting you to dreamland, these prescription pills:

- May leave chemicals in your blood that stay for months.
- May cause side effects like weakness, appetite loss, drying of your mucous membrane, and drowsiness.
- May worsen existing sleep problems such as snoring and sleep apnea (a disorder where breathing is labored or unnatural during sleep).

Sleeping pills should not be used for more than one month continuously. It should also not be used by insomniacs living at high locations or altitudes, because that kind of sleeplessness could be attributed to lack of sufficient oxygen or difficulty in breathing. Taking prescription sleeping pills may be life-threatening in this case since it will further lower your rate of breathing.

Consult with your doctor or health professional before taking any type of sleeping medication.

If you really have to take sleeping pills (with your doctor's approval), you must do it around half an hour before bedtime. Never take sleeping pills in the middle of the night or a few hours before waking up, because you may still experience its effects during the day; unless you want to spend your day yawning at the office. ☺

North, South, East, West

I found out in the internet that sleeping with your face facing the north is good for helping you fall asleep. Sleeping by way of head facing north aligns your body with the magnetic field of the earth, putting your personal energies into harmony with those of the Earth and relaxing your body.

Sunlight

Many (and researches too) believe that bright light (sunlight) is the best and most powerful body clock synchronizer. It helps restore our circadian rhythm, thus helping us sleep better. If you are having difficulty getting to snooze early enough at nighttime it will help if you wake up at the same point in time each day and try to get as much bright light as achievable. This will assist in resetting your internal body clock to an earlier time at night for sleep.

The Sleep Hormone

Have you ever noticed how you are more prone to waking up late in the morning during dark, rainy days? The cool atmosphere could be a contributing factor to snooze longer. But what you may not know is that the dark or dim surrounding is responsible for releasing a hormone in your body known as melatonin.

Melatonin is a hormone that is secreted naturally in your body. It is released by the pineal gland when your body is exposed to darkness and it helps in regulating your circadian rhythm, also known as the body's sleep clock. It is the hormone that induces sleep. No wonder you fall asleep much easier when the light is closed.

Melatonin relies on the quantity of sunlight that penetrate your eyes throughout the day. Light suppresses its activity in your nervous system; therefore, greater exposure to sunlight lets you stay awake during the day and delays the decline in your body temperature. When nighttime comes, your body temperature will drop significantly, allowing you to rest and sleep more deeply.

It is crucially important to be exposed to sunlight more often during the day. If you're not getting enough sunshine, your body temperature will not elevate high enough during the day and it won't decline low enough at night too.

The best time to acquire your daily dose of sunshine would be in the early hours of the morning (from 6 to 8 am). You may also go out during lunch or snack breaks instead of staying in the office so that you can get more exposure to the outside light.

But never overdo it! Don't overexpose yourself to too much sunlight, especially during noontime. The ultraviolet rays of the sun can cause damage to your skin if taken in excessive amounts.

There are other alternatives to sunlight. But before we go into detail, let us first know how light intensity is measured. The unit of measurement is called lux. Fluorescent lights can produce 1 to 500 luxes. Light at sunrise and sunset can produce 5,000 to 10,000 luxes. At noon and early afternoon, it may reach from 30,000 to 100,000 luxes.

The more luxes your body receives during the day, the higher your body temperature will rise. Eventually, the drop in body temperature at night will also be much lower. If you feel lethargic during the early hours of the morning, try to get enough light. Symptoms of depression may even occur if your room is dark.

As you can see, sunlight produces much more luxes than ordinary indoor lights. But what if you really just can't get enough sunlight during the day? Are there other alternatives?

You may use a bright light box. These machines produce artificial light of up to 50,000 luxes.

Melatonin also diminishes as you get older, that's why babies sleep the most hours, while aging people sleep much less.

Avoid looking at the clock

Looking at the clock may cause uneasiness. Looking at the clock makes you anxious of the time and also makes your insomnia worse, so turn the clock away from your eyes or else put it in your cabinet so you would have to turn or get it to see the time. You may perhaps choose not to make the effort and go right back to sleep.

Stomach Massage

This is a technique that soothes your digestive system and helps get a deeper relaxation causing you to sleep right away. It's simple.

Step 1: First, lie on your back and put your hand on your navel.

Step 2: Create little circles in a clockwise direction. Let your circles slowly become larger and larger.

Step 3: After reaching the outer side of your tummy, slowly decrease the size of the circle until you are at your bellybutton.

Step 4: After reaching your navel, do the whole process again but this time do it counter-clockwise. Perform this for a number of times.

Hot & Spicy

Try not to eat too much spicy foods. These spicy foods can disturb your stomach and give you loose bowel movement. Sleeping at the bathroom is definitely not a good idea!

1, 2, 3, Zzzz

Everyone knows this technique. Many try to count from 1, 2, 3, and 4 and so on until they get to sleep. Other people try to count backwards while others count little sheep that jump every second or so from a fence. I found out (in the internet again) why counting jumping little sheep is not that much effective. The article tells that instead of counting leaping sheep, try counting sleeping sheep lined up in a meadow.

Lullaby

Listening to soft music before going to sleep will definitely help you get to sleep. You can buy cassettes as well as records intended for that reason. Some contain composed music; others simply have sounds of waves working out in a pattern like the steady pattern of a heartbeat. However, this technique is of no use if your player will not turn off automatically because you will have to get up and turn it off unless you want your player playing through the whole night.

The Best Thing to Do

Of course, seeing the doctor is the best thing to do because insomnia can be an indication of a far worse disorder. The doctor knows better and he also may recommend other sleeping tips not found in this report. He might also advise you to take some medicine. You should not use the techniques written in this report to replace drugs prescribed by your doctor or other things he tells you to do. :-)

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