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Thank you to Frank & Millie, who couldn't be better than if I had met them in my dreams. My parents, without whom this book would never have been possible and especially my mother who has always had a love for the written word.

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You are not alone in this. I won't let you be.

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The Boss Box

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I consciously called this book a ‘*guide*’ and not a bible, encyclopedia, research paper or complete resource of sleep. It’s a guide because that is what it aims to do: *show you a way forward*.

Sleep is a massive topic and you are a busy person who wants answers fast, so this book is perfect for you.

If you are an insomniac, this probably isn’t the first book about sleep you’ve picked up but if it is, you’ve made a great choice! I say this confidently because this book includes a whole element that all the other books about sleep are missing; namely, that sleep is not just about external factors. For the majority of insomniacs who do not suffer from a sleep disorder, sleep is an internal struggle that crescendos to a frenetic din right when it is supposed to be calm and quiet, and leading to restless nights.

This book offers you a variety of ways to deal with that.

However, once you read it you close the book and that’s it.

Sleep Like A Boss gives you tools that will help you implement your newly gained knowledge. On top of that, it comes with a complete tribe that is there to support you and make you stay on track. It includes what I call the Boss Box. To download all the worksheets and view the helpful tutorial videos in the Boss Box, go to sleeplikeaboss.com/book and enter “Book” in the coupon field.

Your Boss Box includes different tools, such as worksheets, meditations, logs, recipes and so on. Throughout the book I will refer to these tools. Have a look at them, located at the back of this copy. You can also go to sleeplikeaboss.com/book and download them there so you can do more in-depth work by filling them in with your data and thoughts.

These tools are not some *googled* sleep hacks; they’re unique and powerful work created by myself to help you in the most individualized way possible.

I would strongly advise you to take advantage of the Boss Box as it will help you to reach your goal so much faster by providing you with tons of shortcuts, and who doesn’t like those?!

Ready to turn the page?

Let’s begin!

INTRODUCTION

Why Sleep?

One of the questions I'm often asked is: How did you get into this business? There are tons of wellness-focused business, branding, mindset or health coaches out there. So how does one get the idea to focus on *sleep*?

Doesn't everyone know how to sleep? Isn't it enough to simply introduce sleep hygiene, i.e. healthy habits related to sleep, into your life to get rid of those sleepless nights? (I know that some of you are already fuming just reading this. As if you hadn't already tried!)

The truth is though that I got into sleep out of pure selfishness.

When I was pregnant with my daughter, a lot of people jokingly told me to wave goodbye to my sleep. They warned me I'd never sleep again. You see, I love sleep. In fact, during my maternity leave before giving birth I slept in every day and I adored it! When I heard I would NEVER be able to do that again, it freaked me out, especially since I had already decided I wanted to go back to work after my three months of maternity leave, and at that time I was still a high school teacher.

Taming a room of 30 pubescent teenagers while sleep deprived? Good luck with that!

So I did what every good mom-to-be would do: I googled.

And to my amazement there is a whole industry dealing with non-sleeping babies.

Here in Europe baby sleep consultants are very rare. I had never heard of them (though once I started that business I realized I wasn't the only one).

So I signed up for a DIY program that gave me sleep solutions from pre-birth to toddlerhood and made a plan on how I would prepare my daughter to become a great sleeper right from the start. And it worked!

We implemented a schedule early on, gave her tons of time to sleep without disturbing or overwhelming her, and she became, and still is, a very peaceful and well sleeping baby.

I then decided to become a certified pediatric sleep consultant and launched my business, working as a consultant in a pediatrician's practice and on my own locally and online.

But the more people I told about what I did, the more I was asked whether I was also treating adults, and the more I looked into the subject, the more I became

aware that a huge number of people are severely jeopardizing their health and happiness on account of sleep – or lack thereof.

I decided to do some research and ask people whether they had trouble sleeping and if so, whether they were willing to talk to me about it so that I could really figure out how to help them. I quickly realized that a lot more people suffer from sleep issues than I had initially thought.

There are some people who have clear sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea or a circadian rhythm disorder, which I will look at in more detail later on.

But for the most part, my clients and the people I talk to are very healthy. They don't have any 'obvious reason' for not being able to sleep . . . except for being stressed out.

And that creates a vicious circle. Stress can be emotional or biochemical. Your body does not distinguish a difference, and that makes it tricky to counteract.

On top of that, a lot of people consciously and for various reasons sacrifice sleep. In turn, not sleeping enough creates stress on the body, and that same stress makes it difficult for the body to sleep. As a result, all of this leaves people unable to sleep, full stop, even if they wanted to.

Each person is different though and very often it is a combination of many different elements that contributes to sleeplessness.

In every case, however, the first step is to realize how important sleep really is.

Sleep is everything.

Of all the mammals on this planet, human beings are the only ones who consciously deprive themselves of sleep.

Sleep is so important that Mother Nature has gone above and beyond to make sure that every mammal can sleep. Dolphins, for example, only sleep with one brain hemisphere at a time, alternating between the two so that they can be alert but at the same time allow the brain to do its magic.

So let's talk about this 'magic'.

It is very simple. Your brain is connected to your body and directs everything. It gives signals through various channels such as blood, nerves, hormone flow and so on, and that is how all of your cells communicate with each other and make sure you are healthy and strong human being.

Taking care of the human body and mind is a big job, and all this work takes a toll on the brain. In order for the brain to heal itself, it needs rest. If you do not give

it this period of rest it will go into survival mode and take away power from different areas, such as your cognitive functions. Those can be your memory, your focus, your reflex span, but also your mood. It will start telling your body to crank out more cortisol to keep you functioning but a side effect of that is mood swings, depression, and grumpiness, and in the long term this has serious consequences.

It is no surprise then that patients with degenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's or Dementia, are always put on a sleep schedule in order to slow the process down.

But it is not only your cognitive function that is impaired if you have a lack of sleep. Your whole body is stretched to fulfill its capacity, and it works . . . to some extent. The cortisol I talked about is originally meant to help you in very stressful situations and it truly puts you into survival mode. It is designed to give you a spike, making you more alert, feel less pain and basically pumped up, but then it is supposed go down again so that your body can balance itself out.

However, as we tend to push ourselves harder and harder this same cortisol starts to literally break your body down and it damages vital channels between your brain and your organs.

This means that cardiovascular disease, strokes, obesity, diabetes, severe depression, digestive issues, and a host of other diseases are all more likely to develop. Antioxidants decline and free radicals create havoc, making you age faster and, simply, shortening your lifespan.

So even though people might be thinking that they are gaining time by sleeping less . . . in fact they are subtracting that time from their lifespan.

This means that if you want to change anything about your health, cognitive function or well-being, you have to factor in sleep and give it the respect it deserves.

I do not want to imply that everybody is sacrificing sleep consciously. I know that a lot of people desperately want to sleep but just can't. And this often has to do with a combination of emotional and biochemical stress. Because we don't know exactly why sleep is eluding us, it can be very hard to figure out a sound method for getting sleep back and for getting our minds and bodies to welcome that sleep.

The sleep training I undertook about babies was very much based on behavioural alteration (to which I soon added my own strategies which were not as 'traditional' and more intuitive and holistic). Babies are designed to adapt quickly and so it usually only takes a couple of days to get them on track and have them be amazing sleepers. And I thought, if it works for babies, why not adults?

That's when I found a sleep coaching program for adults that focused on

behaviour on top of external lifestyle changes and environmental factors. I was then trained in the Holistic Science of Sleep Method™, added deep coaching for the mind to address emotional stress to my skills and soon became a sleep coach for adults.

I am now also trained in Functional Diagnostic Nutrition, which is helping me to address biochemical stress so that I can truly tackle the issue from every angle.

And it was the best decision I have ever made.

Coaching adults about sleep has now become my passion. I love witnessing first hand my clients' journeys, from breaking down on the phone with me because they feel crazy and isolated due to exhaustion, to emailing me the next day saying that they had the most amazing sleep in over ten years.

Hi Christine! I was just about to email you. Last night went great. I fell asleep with no problem and feel MUCH better today. Your coaching really helped. Thank you!!

Talk soon,

Abbi

Changes like Abbi's, is what this book is about.

I know you are busy.

I know you would love to dive into everything that's been written about sleep, but let's be honest, there are just too many other things on your to-do list. (Although you can always reach out to me and we'll happily philosophize over sleep on a Skype date.) So this guide is as efficient as I could create it whilst not being superficial.

I am looking forward to seeing you rekindle your love affair with sleep and getting you sleeping like a boss!

Enjoy the ride!

CHAPTER 1

So What? (The most powerful question that will stop your anxiety.)

Cut yourself some slack

More than ever, sleep is emerging as a hot topic of discussion, with the likes of Arianna Huffington, a major sleep evangelist, touting its significance. This move into the spotlight is great, as it is high time to lose the badge of honour of sleep deprivation as we become more aware and responsible for our sleep habits.

Having said that, there is a considerable side effect from this increased focus on sleep.

Let me explain. People who truly suffer from insomnia are very well aware of what a nightmare it is. They are anxious about going to sleep and night is a time of agony instead of peace.

They know that their memory is being affected because they have tried to call their friends on a piece of cheese, having put their phone in the fridge instead and confused the two.

They know they aren't able to focus because they were in the car and looked down and realized that they had forgotten to put their skirt on. (True story!)

They know that their body is suffering because they are aching from their big toenail to their eyelashes.

So all the articles, blog posts and newest studies aren't actually helping them. Rather, the media hype surrounding the importance of sleep is freaking them out even more.

On top of that, many of them are very health conscious and they have read the typical sleep hacks over and over again. Those blog posts are everywhere, with the same top ten tips to follow.

But what if you have tried all of the routines, all the strategies, have meditated your brains out, and still, nothing is working?

It drives you nuts!

It is frustrating and, frankly, it pisses you off!

And it leaves you feeling even more hopeless and powerless.

So how can this book help you?

By telling you the most important element that so many of the other books, blog posts and articles don't mention:

Sleep is uncontrollable.

You cannot grasp sleep. You cannot take it and force it on yourself. Even with sleeping pills you will never get the same sleep as you'll get if you fall asleep naturally.

And that is what is so unfair. Sleep can easily be ripped from you but the opposite is not possible.

So for someone who likes to be in control, this is close to unbearable.

And so you need to start with this:

You need to understand that it is okay to allow yourself not to be perfect!

What do I mean by that? And what does it have to do with sleep?

Let me introduce Sleep to you, my way.

Sleep is kind of like your high-maintenance, fussy bitch friend, who can be so challenging and yet you know that she has a heart of gold and that once she connects she will do everything for the ones who are close to her.

Sleep is like that. When Sleep doesn't feel welcomed she has a hard time cradling you in her arms. When she feels like that, she can't be your ally. On the contrary, she will tease you and push you to the edge.

So, in order to welcome Sleep, you have to make sure the circumstances are right.

You are the mold and she is the puzzle piece. If you are too stressed and try to force Sleep into that puzzle mold, it won't fit. So it is up to you to change your mindset and your lifestyle so that your mold will become more and more the shape it needs to be. Sleep is flexible so you don't need to be perfect, but you have to try to make it as easy as possible for Sleep to fit your unique mold.

Trouble is that this mold does not just consist of your state of mind or of your body, but rather it is a combination of the two! So even if you have applied all the recommendations of the sleep hacks, be it their focus on environment, nutrition, and so forth, it might be that your mind stands in your way. Or it can be the other way around. You might be brilliant at meditating but some exterior factor is making it difficult for Sleep to embrace you at night. And as many as they might be, those hacks are only able to scratch the surface.

There are a lot of different elements that can interfere with sleep and in this book I am going to help you to become aware of the ones I see most often when working with clients. Once you understand how these elements can work against you, you'll be better able to welcome Sleep with open arms and have her work her

magic on you so that come daytime, you are unstoppable.

Now don't get me wrong. This is not an easy task and there's no one size fits all answer, as those puzzle molds are just as unique as fingerprints. However, throughout this book you will become aware, step by step, of what you have to keep in mind and observe in order to gradually figure out your perfect tweaks and lifestyle changes that will allow you to welcome sleep, in order to become a vessel for it.

We will start with one basic but crucial mindset. There is one main component that is coming up again and again that is blocking your most determined efforts:

Give yourself permission to have a bad night.

I completely understand if you think I am crazy. Heck, I am a sleep coach, shouldn't I be preaching that you have to get eight hours of sleep or else you will get diabetes, become obese and have a heart attack? (Most likely all at the same time whilst you are driving a car during rush hour, of course!)

Let me tell you why this point is so important to me.

When I started working with clients, I really noticed that they freaked out about having to get eight hours of sleep. So much so that when night would approach their anxiety levels would already start rising.

Let me ask you a couple of questions:

So what if you have an imperfect night? Haven't you had those before? And what happened after a night that didn't go too well? Did you lose your job? Did you die of a heart attack?

Most likely you managed just fine. Sure the next day wasn't as easy or as powerful as you would have liked it to be but you managed!

If I am correct you have even had bad nights for some months or years by now and you have still managed to pull through.

So next time your thoughts start circling around your fear of not getting enough Sleep, ask yourself: SO WHAT?

It will be fine! Optimal? No. But it will be fine.

And even if you are setting lots of steps into place, some nights just won't be perfect and that's okay too.

You cannot control Sleep, so just loosen up and stop trying to be perfect in that department because you will not succeed every time.

Now if you want, you can stomp off and yell at me, close the book and throw it against the wall because this is most likely not what you want to hear just a few

pages in, but I am not here to tell you what you want to hear. I am here to tell you what you NEED to hear.

So yes, you'll fail at times, but it's not a lost cause. Why not? Because while we can't control sleep, we are not completely powerless either.

We just need to think differently.

Instead of trying to dominate and force Sleep upon us, we can develop techniques to persuade it to come to us. We can learn to excel at welcoming it and setting ourselves up for Sleep. Think of it like dating. If you are too desperate they just won't be into you.

Imagine having invited Sleep for dinner, being fully aware that she will throw a strop if the setting isn't to her liking.

Sure, we need basic cutlery and dishes to set up the dining experience, but for finicky Sleep, that's not enough. It's not enough to just give her food and a fork. She wants a whole dining experience. We need to set the mood, we need to make her relax, really enjoy herself. We need flowers, soft napkins, delightful music, great conversation. We need creative touches that will set the tone or feeling.

All of those elements are a metaphor for your environment, such as your nutrition, hydration and movement, but also your mindset.

When everything is set up as well as can be, our guest Sleep will love it and thank us for it by settling down easily and restoring our cells, brain power and mind. It's a beautiful relationship.

There is one more important element that you must remember when you feel anxiety is kicking in:

You are not alone in this.

There are so many people out there struggling just like you. So go to your window, take a look outside and give them an imaginary wave. You'll get there.

Another thing that I want you to be aware of is that we all have different preferences when it comes to how to get great Sleep.

For example, some of us like to snuggle up against our partners to fall asleep. But some of us don't. If your partner is a snuggler and you need your space, that can get tricky. If that's the case, try to gently explain this to your partner and clarify that it doesn't have anything to do with how much you love him or her, but that it is just a necessity and that it is important to you to get good rest. (You can say this book said so as evidence in case they are a bit miffed about it!)

In the next chapters we will start setting you up for success.

We will start with the mind and do not worry, I am very aware of the fact that

all of you work differently. I have compiled a complete toolbox for all kinds of scenarios.

There will be breathing exercises and meditation recommendations but there will also be alternatives for those of you who just squirm at the thought of meditating and working towards a blank mind.

I once had a client who was so proud when she told me that she had ‘the blankest mind I could imagine’. A short while later she told me that her whole body was itching and her heart was racing but her mind was a blank... Not really possible but adorable. And so for her it was a huge relief to learn that there are other ways of helping the racing brain to calm down for Sleep.

So rest assured. We will find something for you within the next pages. And I will also help you to stick with the changes over the coming days and weeks.

CHAPTER 2

Getting You to Sleep Like a Boss

Setting goals that you will fulfill!

This chapter is going to change everything, and by *everything*, I mean not only sleep, but your whole life.

How many times have you told yourself that you will stick to a diet, go to the gym every day, floss your teeth more regularly or meditate daily?

I get it. You are busy, your time is limited and there are a hundred thousand things that can become more important. Especially more important than sleep.

We now know that you may need to make quite a few lifestyle changes, and as you probably know, most people do not cope too well with a change in habits. It's nothing personal; it is just the way we are wired. On top of that, for a new habit to be really accepted by our bodies, it can take a good six weeks, not a mere 21 days as some people will have you believe.

So how will this time be different?

In this chapter I am going to fill you in on one crucial component to success that all the books or articles about sleep I have previously read have failed to address.

It is your motivation.

Some so-called experts try to motivate by scaring you into changing your sleep habits. They say you will become ill, drive your car into a wall and so forth. And while, yes, that can be true I do not believe that this is going to help you to stay motivated long-term.

And that is why I am a sleep coach, and not only an expert or consultant.

Coaching is a huge part of my work with clients and today I want to fill you in on how it works and how it can change your life.

Coaching works because it allows you to realize that sleep is only a side effect. Sleep is not the goal in itself. The goal is something deeper, something you are striving for, worrying over, perhaps something you haven't even named. If you discover and address your true goal, sleep will finally be able to embrace you. Once you have discovered your true goal, it will ignite a fire in you that will be hard, if not impossible, to extinguish. This experience can be extremely powerful and sometimes, when we are just about to allow this dream to fully emerge in our mind, we pull back because we are scared by its intensity. It is important to understand

that that fear is okay and showing you how you are growing and it should not be the reason to stop. On the contrary, continue letting your true passion and vision come through. It will be worth it because once you know what it is, it won't leave you. It will continue to motivate you and hence, guarantee your success. So do not skip this step!

So how can you get that fire to appear?

I am going to guide you to the real dream, purpose or goal you have stored away. This can be a dream of a goal, a legacy or a vision and it is going to be completely different from person to person.

So let me give you some examples.

For some of you, your dream might be to reconnect with your partner, or even an ex partner.

It could be to have more patience with your family and being at home more.

It could be spending more quality time with family or friends.

For some of you it could be something in your work life. Maybe create the business you have always envisioned having. Or becoming the top leader in your industry, motivating and inspiring thousands of people in this world.

It could be building a huge legacy. To truly change this world, save this planet and make your life here on this earth count.

It could be getting a better grip on your health. You may seem tough on the outside but actually you crave to be healthier and feel better in your own skin.

Or you have an illness and want to do whatever you can to get a bit more time.

Others of you want to do more. You are already working a lot but you just feel like you are still not getting enough done. And your insomnia is not helping.

For some of you it might be a financial number. You want to make your first million or billion. It is something you secretly crave, but you have shelved it . . . for now.

Some of you might be annoyed at your behaviour throughout your life because you are so tired and you don't even like yourself anymore. You are snappy and have alienated so many of your close ones. And you don't want to be that way. You want to be the person people actually like and want to be around. And there is nothing wrong with that.

For others it might be that you want to have a better sex life again.

You used to get loads and now it seems to be just on the rare occasion. You are so tired that passionate sex seems like a distant memory. And you want it back.

Whatever your deep desire or goal, we are going to find it, name it and go after

it. So let's go digging shall we?

I want you to really *go there*.

Remember that nobody can see into your head. And even though you are reading and hearing my words in your mind, I cannot hear yours.

So go there. Be honest with yourself and yes, it won't be easy and yes, it can be uncomfortable. And that is good. Once we have found what you truly want, everything in your life will become easier because you will be clear in your intentions and it will hence be a lot easier to implement changes that might be necessary as your willpower will be unstoppable.

In order to help you with this I have created some worksheets that will guide you through the process with strategic questions and space to write down your thoughts. You can find them in the boss box at the back of this book or you can of course go to the website sleeplikeaboss.com/book and print them out from there. I highly, highly recommend you do this because nothing will create results better than actually taking a pen and writing down what is going on in your mind. This process is different from 'just thinking'. You are literally dragging your thoughts out of your head and help to diffuse any stress that might be going on. On top of that your brain follows a different pattern when writing than when only thinking and so it often happens that we get new, creative ideas when writing things down rather than just thinking about them.

Let's start with this question:

Which idea or goal of yours is connected to this phrase: '*But I won't get it anyway,*' or '*But I gave up on that a long time ago.*'

Once you have that idea you are on the right track.

Then, my next questions for you are:

'Why is that idea important to you?'

'What will happen once you have achieved it?'

Try to really go there and imagine having achieved that idea. What will your days look like? Who will you be with? What will you wear? Where will you live? What are the smells surrounding you? Is it a sea breeze? Fancy leather car seats? Homemade cookies fresh out of the oven?

Remember. Nobody is here. Nobody is judging you or holding you back.

Let's continue.

Think of your idea as being wrapped inside a big box. We've cracked it open and have just dusted off that old idea. But in that first box along with your coveted idea is another box. And in that box is the true motivation that will light you up and

that is kind of scaring you. Because you know that it is so powerful that once you open it, you will not be able to just cram it back into that box.

And that is a good thing.

So what is it? What is it that truly sets you on fire, that makes your heart beat faster and that you know is going to keep you going and going?

It should be more than 'just' money, looking like a supermodel or a new handbag. What else would happen if you had all of those things? What else could you achieve in order to have made your life truly extraordinary? Which magazine cover would you be on? And more importantly what for?

Let me quickly tell you about my box so that you understand. My passion is my work, helping people to sleep again. But that isn't just because I want to help individuals. Of course that is the major ingredient but my ultimate goal is to have those people in turn create amazing things and have a beautiful impact on this world. It is like a ripple effect that started when they began working with me.

On top of that I want my business to flourish to such an extent that I can make a true impact. My goal is to found two charities. One for orphans, as I was adopted myself, and one for animals in danger of being poached. Animals are helpless and I want to use my fortune to fight for them.

That is my bigger picture and that is what keeps driving me every day.

Go there! Don't be scared. It will be your biggest motivator.

So take your worksheets and start writing. Nobody is watching you or judging you so go crazy with this. Don't listen to any nagging voices in your head that might be whispering that you won't be able to do this anyway or that you aren't good enough. You can acknowledge them but then tell them to bugger off and continue writing.

You will feel how your heart will start to tingle and you will start smiling because you just know that it feels right. And when that happens don't stop! Keep going! And once you are done you should be happily exhausted.

That's when you know that you have succeeded.

Don't forget that the only job you have on this earth is to be happy. That is why happiness feels so good. And actually it is contagious, which means that it isn't selfish. On the contrary, it is selfless!

Keeping that in mind your goal shouldn't be created out of fear or pressure, but out of choice. You should want to make this impact. It should be your wish and your decision.

Now I understand this can be intimidating. Again, you will probably hear your

voice of reason screaming at you: are you nuts? This will never work! You will be disappointed. . . again!

I understand if that is too much for some of you but bear in mind that it won't just make your path to better sleep much easier, it will make everything easier.

Why?

Because purposes like these won't leave you alone and they will push you to not give up! Changing your habits, which through my experience is required 99% of the time, to sleep better is work. I won't sugarcoat this. And it's oh so easy to just cheat a little here and there and then in the end give up and be frustrated. But if you have this goal in mind it will push you forward and it will avoid failure!

Whenever you feel like taking a shortcut or cheating, whether it's related to your new diet, your sleep ritual or anything else that you discovered should be changed to have you sleep better, then this goal will pull you back and help you to stay disciplined.

You will be able to change your life with ease and see results much, much quicker than if you just mindlessly tried to change everything from one minute to the next.

So go ahead and fill in those worksheets and let your goal emerge.

...

You got it? (*I was not kidding, go and do the exercises NOW* 📌)

...

Now isn't that something?

And now know that you will become smarter, stronger and better when you are sleeping well again. And that you will reach that vision so much quicker because of your ally: sleep.

I cannot wait to see you succeed!

And do you know what the best thing is? You are not alone in this. I will help you to remember this vision to make sure it will help you to reach your goal of better sleep.

So I have prepared something for you. Go to sleeplikeaboss.com/book and in the resources you will find a form into which you can fill in your email address and your ultimate scary but powerful goal. You don't even have to write out your goal; you can use initials. A client of mine wanted to publish a new kind of magazine. So her reminder was NM.

Fill it in and you will get reminders from time to time (don't worry you will not have a spam attack) to help you remember.

In order to set you up for success it is also important for you to remember that you, and only you, are in control of what you do and what you don't do.

Yes, there may be a hundred thousand thoughts in your head that criticize you and come up with the worst case scenario but do not forget: They are just thoughts. They do not control anything. You are the only one who can act.

All right. So now that we have established your goal I want to prepare you for everything that you may have to tackle when it comes to your sleep.

It's not your fault!

Before we go further, I really want to clarify that for true insomniacs it isn't your fault that you can't sleep! Even if you know and have even followed all the sleep hacks in the world it is very likely that there is one element that might be the culprit for your sleepless nights that you have overlooked.

So we will shine a light on each element that might affect your sleep one by one.

First of all, everyone has flaws and you will always be stressed, anxious and insecure about something. And that is okay. The trick is to learn to become more aware of these issues. As soon as you detect a thought that is bothering you, welcome it -because now you can work with it.

The danger happens when things stress you out without you realising it. So one task is to become aware of potential triggers.

Here are some common areas that often influence us. And it is likely that you don't want to think about them because it might become uncomfortable and it might be painful.

So consider this a heads up and come back to this list if you must, but above all, be truthful with yourself.

The general question is: What is freaking you out right now?

Could it be something at your workplace? And by that I don't just mean tasks.

It could also be co-workers, the location or even something that is supposed to be positive. Like a promotion for example. Theoretically you should be thrilled. But are you really? Or is the new responsibility making you feel anxious? Whatever it is, it's okay. Just make sure you acknowledge it and look at it and tell it: 'I found you, and I am in control, not you'. Even if it is your boss, you can still decide about your life. You can decide what you want to do, whether you want to keep your eyes open for a new opportunity, or not. It is your choice.

Could it be something in your relationships? Whether it is family, friends or partner. Or maybe you don't have a partner and that is the cause for your anxiety. Nobody likes to talk about that but sometimes we find ourselves at a completely different place in our lives than we thought we would be at a certain age, and it stresses us out. Go there. Acknowledge and then see how you can deal with it. Can you do it alone or do you need help? Knowing what is having you stressed is the first step. So well done.

What is your financial situation like? Is that maybe the factor that is causing you anxiety? If so, what can you do? What notions do you have of money? And are they yours or someone else's? Too often our idea of money is not really our own but what we have been told when growing up or by our surroundings. Listen to yourself and acknowledge.

What about your health? What is your nutrition like? If your conscience is rising right now then greet it and let it know that you are aware of what you are doing. Sometimes that is enough. In a next step you can gather the determination and strength to change it.

How do you feel about your body? Is there anything you can do about it? If you notice that this is your main reason for anxiety, then work on that first. Find someone who can help you with this so that you feel at peace again.

These are just some common issues. All I want you to do is think and when you feel a discomfort, that is when you struck gold.

However, there are more factors that affect sleep.

Apart from our self-awareness, we need to look at nutrition, hydration, environment, ecology and also be aware of what sleep disorders look like, just in case.

In the following chapters we will look at all of these factors one by one and in the appendix you will find resources that can help you implement changes should you need to make any.

CHAPTER 3

Sleep and the Mind

Almost 99% of clients I see tell me they can't sleep because they cannot stop their minds from racing at night. So it is only logical for me to start here, by looking at how our thoughts affect sleep, before looking at external factors.

On the following pages I will fill you in on the main culprits and I will give you strategies that can help you beat the anxiety-insomnia feedback loop.

Let's get to the bottom of this mess.

The first thing I want you to think about is whether there has ever been a time when you slept well. Most of us did not always have trouble with sleep. At one time we probably slept very well, but then something changed: we have had a trigger event.

A trigger event is something that has happened in our lives that has caused emotional trauma. Emotional trauma goes through our complete body. And, as previously noted, our bodies don't differentiate between biological or emotional stress. The consequence of any stress whatsoever is that we produce more cortisol. Cortisol is a hormone that is necessary for our body and in essence it helps us to be alert and cope in stressful situations.

However, if you produce too much of it for an extended period of time it will eventually create chaos within your metabolic system as it takes a toll on your adrenal glands and so your body will try to compensate in other areas.

Let me give you an example of what this could look like.

One client of mine hadn't slept well ever since her father died ten years prior. She had suspected his death might have had something to do with her lack of sleep but she didn't think that emotions alone could truly be the reason for her sleep issues.

Other examples of traumatic events include:

Parents separating or divorcing,

Physical,

sexual,

or emotional abuse,

Physical and emotional neglect,

Domestic violence,

Mental illness in the family,
Substance abuse,
Incarceration of a related family member.¹

Traumatic events don't have to be big catastrophes; they can be smaller events that we may perceive at the time as trivial. They can happen at our workplace, in our family or our relationships. Maybe you had an argument with a co-worker or a relative and it's bothering you more than you realize. Don't discount an event just because you think you should be over it. These issues can creep into our psyches and disrupt sleep more than you think.

Look into your past and see if you can find a trigger and then find someone to talk to about it. Talking or writing is different than just thinking because while thinking, your brain will try to play all kinds of tricks on you to keep you in the same old pattern, which it considers the safest option. It means well but the amygdala, which is a gland that is responsible to keep you safe, overpowers your will in that instance to keep you in known and secure patterns. When writing and seeing your thoughts and words it is easier to catch that yourself. And when you do you can then change course, push yourself further and even though it might be out of your comfort zone, you will grow.

So make sure you get your thoughts out of your brain. The worksheets will help you with this but on top of that my favorite exercise for this is journaling. Get one notebook for any thoughts that are bothering you and that you know are likely to haunt you in your sleep or will keep you from sleeping. Write them down and then keep your journal away from your bedroom. This might seem a bit silly but the reason is that there shouldn't be anything negative in your bedroom and the presence of that journal alone can trigger memories. Your bedroom should harbor only positive things, so whilst it is important to write down your thoughts about those elements that make you unhappy or stress you out, keep it away from your sleeping environment.

How *you* doin'?

Now that you've delved into what thoughts you are bringing with you to bed each night, I want you to now look at your relationship with sleep.

¹ <http://www.nikigratrix.com/acesscore/>

Remember Sleep is like a character on its own. In Chapter 1 I explained how we all have different types of sleep. How do you perceive yours? Have you always had a troubled relationship?

Was everyone in your entire family a bad sleeper so that you believe that you logically are too?

Or maybe you are scared of Sleep because we all know that the last final sleep is when we won't wake up anymore.

Maybe you have already given up on your Sleep and doubt that you will ever have a harmonious relationship?

If you are stressed and have negative feelings about Sleep then it won't be easy for Sleep to feel welcomed. And when Sleep does arrive, it will only come out of obligation - meaning when you are exhausted - in order to keep you living and functioning.

I want you to know that even though you cannot really control Sleep, you can absolutely change yourself so that you welcome Sleep's arrival. You have the power to do that.

So start with your ideas about your Sleep and try to reframe them.

Sleep is an ally. It has a lot of powers and can change your life. It wants to change your life but there is some form of miscommunication between you two and you are now ready to get to the bottom of this and improve your relationship forever.

And that is totally doable.

Beat your Brain with Breath.

I want you to think about the things we have discussed above that might stress you out, and instead of going into a tailspin, I want to give you techniques that will help you beat anxiety.

Because believe it or not, you have the power to kick anxiety to the curb.

There are different ways to do this but I will start with the most effective and easiest one, which is breathing.

Changing your breath from chest breathing, which is typical for stressful situations, to abdominal breathing is going to affect your brain in a positive way.

When you are stressed, you basically have your primitive brain kicking in.

Let me explain that for you.

When you see a snake for example, the first thing you do is stop. That is your fight or flight brain kicking in. Next, you evaluate. Is this a dangerous snake or a harmless garden snake? And then you act upon that reflection. That process happens

in the blink of an eye in the neocortex, which is the area that helps us reason.

In small children, the neocortex isn't developed yet, which is why they need assistance to self-regulate. They can't reason yet.

When you are stressed your primitive brain takes over and pushes the neocortex aside and you start breathing into your chest. Many of us are constantly stressed and therefore constantly breathe very shallowly.

So forcing yourself to breathe into your abdomen will revert that process and help your neocortex to kick in again and force your brain to relax.

How do you do that?

Put your hands on your belly and start by breathing out.

Feel your belly sinking in.

Breathe in and feel your belly going out.

What is happening is that when you breathe that way your body identifies it as you being relaxed, whether you actually are or not. The result is that your brain will then actually adapt and you will indeed start to be relaxed.

So you have the power to control your primitive brain and switch it off. Isn't that amazing?

For a full demonstration of this technique I have created a video that you can find on my website sleeplikeaboss.com/book

Get 4 hours of sleep in 1.

A topic I want to talk about meditation, which can be extremely helpful.

Meditating according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is:

to engage in contemplation or reflection

to engage in mental exercise (as concentration on one's breathing or repetition of a mantra) for the purpose of reaching a heightened level of spiritual awareness

Meditation can be very spiritual, drawing on metaphors and rather ethereal visualizations, but no matter how you do it, most of the time it requires you to be still and quiet.

Now I am very much aware that staying still is not for everyone and might actually stress some people out, so do not fret if it's not your thing. I will offer you alternatives that allow and even encourage you to move, as well as use language that is more factual than spiritual.

No matter what you choose though I truly want to encourage you to incorporate some form of meditation in your life as it will help you to diffuse stress and

therefore not have it crash down on you with all its might come nighttime. This is not only beneficial for your sleep but it helps your body to balance out those cortisol levels, thereby improving your complete health.

Ideally you should try to incorporate meditation during the day, but if that is not doable try to do it some time before going to bed. I'd suggest a good hour before bed and as a start of your night time routine.

A traditional yoga practice can work wonders because it will help you first of all to move your body and get your circulation going and it helps to diffuse emotional stress. There are different types of yoga but all of them should have a short spiritual part that helps you to become more practiced in controlling your mind to relax. So if yoga is something you want to try or already practice, then I wholeheartedly encourage that.

Personally I am a big fan iRest. iRest is a relaxation program that was developed for soldiers suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. iRest works by guiding your focus to different parts of your body, just asking you to be aware of them. The order of which organs you focus on is very cleverly designed to have both sides of your brain active, which helps you to shut out any external thoughts and relax. As a result, you are able to decompress.

The rhythm of the guidance can be very powerful because iRest is a form of Yoga Nidra, which is a type of yoga known to help you drift into a deep conscious sleep. This means you will be awake but you will drift into the same state as during deep sleep but without dreaming and without being completely unaware.

The guidance and focus of iRest will help you to mimic the same brain patterns as the ones you have when you are in deep sleep. This means that once you finish you will feel extremely refreshed and rejuvenated.

These techniques are extremely powerful and they are often only 20 minutes long, sometimes even less. That is why they work well during the day too, when you notice your energy is drained and you need to boost your brain and body.

For those of you who are feeling all itchy and nervous about the thought of 'just lying or sitting there' I would recommend a kind of walking meditation.

Keep Moving

A favourite exercise of mine that can help you sleep is the Afghan Walk which was discovered when a man called Édouard G. Stiegler observed the nomads walking for miles and miles with their caravans without seemingly becoming tired. He discovered that they had a certain breathing pattern that when connected with

certain rhythmic thoughts would keep them going for hours. It is an extremely powerful tool and exactly the right solution for those of you who work best with movement.

Here's how it's done. Start walking and breathe in with each step for the first three steps. Pause your breath on step four and then breathe out with each step for the next three steps. Have a break at step four again and continue on. While you are doing this, visualize whatever is on your mind. You can combine this with a mantra. For example 'I (step one and breathe in), feel (step two and breathe in), great (step three and breathe in), *Pause* (step four), I (step five and breathe out), feel (step six and breathe out), great (step seven and breathe out), *Pause* (step eight)' and start at step one again.

After a while you will get into a steady rhythm and eventually you can find your own breathing pattern but 3/1/3/1 is the easiest to start with.

It is important to realize that you may have to try out a few different techniques until you find the one that works best for you. You will find out which ones will make you impatient and which ones will just help you to switch off and feel more energised afterwards. But the tools I just listed have proven successful for many of my clients.

So let's continue to further methods that can help you master your stress.

Freak Out

One technique I really like is 'freak out time'.

Let me explain.

We are often so busy during the day that we don't have time to worry about what stresses us. But come nighttime we suddenly have all this time and quietness that lets all of our worries and thoughts that we've conveniently suppressed during the day come storming in.

So what we want to try to do is diffuse all of this tension and divide our worries up during the day.

And so I am officially giving you permission to worry.

So here is what you do:

You schedule 10-30 minutes in your calendar each day according to what works best in your schedule. Use the initials of the ultimate goal we worked out during the second chapter to schedule the event. The reason for this is that it will be much easier to hold yourself accountable when you feel that fire lightning up again.

When the time comes, leave your mobile behind and go outside. Walk or sit down and let the uncomfortable thoughts come to you and worry to the greatest extent possible. So really go to the worst of the worst case scenario, which is probably you dead lying in a ditch somewhere. That would be the worst case scenario. So really go ridiculously far. Doing this will help you to put things back into perspective and I promise you at some point you will be so annoyed with yourself that you will realise that some things are not worth worrying about and that other things will not overwhelm you in the evening anymore.

Here's what a recent client wrote to me:

I need to tell you what just happened. I spent ten minutes writing in my journal. I went from smaller concerns to larger ones (not really on purpose, it's just the way it was flowing). The last sentence in all caps was, "EVERYTHING WILL FAIL THIS WEEK!!!" By the time I was finishing the exclamation marks I was laughing. My blood pressure dropped ten points and I'm now able to focus on the grand vision by working on the next small steps.

I'm still smiling because I've got my perspective back. Thank you, Christine, for that alone.

Lisa

I hope this gives you an idea of what I am trying to explain.

The Power of the Pen

A further technique that can be helpful and that I briefly mentioned before is journaling. So instead of walking or sitting and worrying you can write your thoughts down in a journal. However, once again, this isn't something to do just before going to bed as this might work you up even more. Find time in your day to this instead. It is important that you write it and not just 'think it'. Your brain will not take the same paths as when you write it down and so even though it might seem a bit more tedious, it is well worth it.

By writing out your thoughts and worries, they begin to lose their power over you because they are not bottled up in your brain anymore but instead have been diffused by being written onto paper. You can just start writing or you can actually take the subject that is bothering you and write a letter to it.

As Sleep is our topic you could for example write a letter to it. You could write a love letter, telling it how much you actually love it and how you miss it. You could write an apology letter, telling it that you are sorry for being so angry at it, cursing it and being so frustrated with it. This might sound strange but again: nobody but you will read this and nobody will judge you. What this will do is help you to forgive and build a new relationship with sleep that will be a lot healthier.

University of Texas at Austin psychologist and researcher James Pennebaker "... believes that writing about stressful events helps you come to terms with them, thus reducing the impact of these stressors on your physical health."²

If you don't want to dwell on the negative, there is another exercise you can do instead or on top of your regular journaling. It's called a gratitude journal. It involves writing down three positive things that happened to you during the day. And those positive things needn't be as grand as achieving world peace; it could simply be a new interesting connection on LinkedIn or a free lunch. Three simple things that made you smile that day. The reason for this is that you will feel so much more lighthearted afterwards.

Just be sure to keep a separate journal of gratitude so that you won't mix up your positive and negative thoughts. Otherwise you run the risk of remembering something that you had already forgotten just before going to bed. It is just much more refreshing to only have positive thoughts in the journal that you will use just before going to bed.

'Der Klügere Gibt Nach'

One of the most important steps you should apply before going to bed or at night when you wake up is the simple question we pondered at the very beginning:

So what?

So what if your night isn't going to be perfect?

Remember the worst night you've had and remember (or try to remember) the day after that. You survived. Were you tired? Yes! Were you as charming as always? Probably not but you managed! And that is the most important thing.

So when you start freaking out again remember that. So what if your night isn't perfect? So what if you are tired the next day? You will make it work. You have

² <http://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling/>

already managed so much in your life, you will continue to do so.

As a German expression goes, 'Der Klügere gibt nach' (the cleverer person gives in, not up)!

Now I do completely understand that sometimes you cannot help it - you wake up and your mind goes in all directions. A full-on action movie in your head with your thoughts racing and all kinds of weird memories, ideas and worries showing up. When this happens it is quite simple: Sleep has left the building. It doesn't matter whether this is at the beginning to the middle of the night.

Your sleep has gone and has no intention of coming back soon. So you can lie in your bed, patiently (or not so patiently) waiting. Your level of patience won't change how quickly your sleep will decide to come back.

The best thing to do in this case is actually to get up. Leave your bedroom and do something that will keep you busy but that won't engross you so that the hours fly by without you noticing. Good activities are, for example, folding laundry, ironing or Sudoku puzzles. All of these will keep your mind busy enough without being too passionate and they won't allow your thoughts to go haywire either.

You could also read something but here I'd advise you to be careful about what you choose to read. For example, if you are a hardcore fiction fan I wouldn't suggest reading the *Game of Thrones* in the middle of the night. I'd rather go for *Tax Returns for Dummies* or something similar.

These activities should eventually tire you out and soon enough you'll be able to go back to bed and catch a bit of sleep. But that is the trick: you need to let sleep creep back in on its own rather than beg for its return.

Same Same - The Routine is The Boss!

Another great tool is something that you may consider to be obvious but is actually extremely powerful . . . if done correctly. And that is a routine. Now why would I say, "if done correctly"? You may already think that your daily tasks add up to some kind of routine, but a real routine is this:

The SAME steps, at the SAME time, in the SAME order EVERY DAY.

So it actually takes quite a bit of discipline to implement a great routine. But it does help to train your brain. Our brain is incredibly complex, yes, but it is also extremely trainable and a routine is doing just that: training your brain. When you persist in your habits and patterns, your whole body will respond and be ready to welcome sleep much, much more easily because it knows what the next step is. It helps our brain to feel secure and it knows what is expected of it.

To help you get started on a routine that will work for you, I have prepared some options in the Boss Box that you can mix and match to create whatever routine you think fits your personality best. I've provided a worksheet for you which you can find at the back of the book or on the website, to write down your routine so you can keep it close to you.

In the end, you need to figure out what works for you to calm your mind and prepare yourself mentally for sleep. Try out some of the tips in this chapter and see how they help you. Of course, there are other things outside of yourself that you can do to welcome sleep, and I'll get into those external factors in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

External Factors

Now that we have set ourselves up for success from the inside, we will take a look at some of the external factors that may affect your sleep.

From nutrition to exercise to your mattress, I will go through them one by one and I suggest you do so too whilst taking advantage of the resources in the Boss Box in the appendix, which will have worksheets on all of those factors. Use those sheets to write down what kind of steps you want to do for each chapter.

I will not go into too much detail but by the end of each section you should have a good grasp of how each element relates to sleep and what you can do to prepare your body for sleep in that specific area.

You are what you eat

It seems logical that nutrition is important for how our body works, so it is only natural that it can also influence our sleep.

In this section I am going to fill you in on how what you eat influences your sleep, and I will also give you practical suggestions on how to improve your diet.

In the appendices I have included some special sleep recipes and shopping lists for sleep foods. That way you will not have to worry about getting it wrong or taking too much time to research before your next trip to the grocery store.

The first thing you need to know is that our bodies set themselves up to sleep. But there are different processes needed for this to happen.

It starts with an amino acid called tryptophan, which is the first building block in getting us to feel sleepy. When ingested, tryptophan gets converted into serotonin (also called the happy hormone) and then into melatonin, the sleep hormone.

Melatonin is responsible for regulating our sleep. It doesn't induce sleepiness but rather lets our brain know that it is time to go to sleep. It is triggered by our pineal gland, which can be described as a sensor for light. Once the pineal gland notices that it is getting dark it will start releasing melatonin and hence our body will slowly prepare for sleep.

So how can we use this knowledge in order to sleep better?

Tryptophan cannot be produced by our body, so we need to get it through our food. Proteins are the main providers of tryptophan, and carbs help to get it to the brain faster.

If you have midnight craves and cannot resist a small snack, then I'd stick to a mix of carbs and protein, like peanut butter on toast for example.

Do be careful though, because food can also interrupt our sleep.

If you consume sugary foods, for example, they will make your body release insulin in order to balance out the excess sugar in your bloodstream. A side effect of our body releasing this insulin is that it also produces more... you guessed it, cortisol.

Cortisol is the opposite of melatonin. Instead of telling our body to get ready to sleep it gives us a push, similar to adrenalin, and therefore, during the day, it is supposed to help us be awake and alert. If you get a cortisol push in the evening however, your whole body is basically working against you and stopping you from sleeping well.

So what can you do?

Avoid anything sugary or overly processed in the evening hours. This includes the obvious suspects, like sweets or excessively salty snacks, such as crisps (chips), which are highly processed.

But there can also be subtler intruders. Too much fruit (and don't forget tomato is a fruit too), white bread and processed cereal are all rich in sugar.

So stick to those foods (preferably organic and healthy unprocessed foods) during the day and focus on vegetables and lean meats, such as chicken or turkey, in the evening.

If you are really dedicated I would suggest you take a look at the nutrition log I have created for you and fill that in for three weeks every week day and one day over the weekend. Highlight the foods that you think might interfere with your sleep and exchange them for so-called sleep foods (list in the appendices). If you think that might be too challenging for you then have a nutritionist look over it for you. A nutritionist should be able to help you lower your sugar intake in the evening. When I work one-on-one with clients this is an integral part of the service I offer.

Now most importantly, I want you to pay attention to your body whilst you are logging your food journal and see whether you can detect a pattern. Look at what you ate and when you ate it to see whether it correlates with good and bad nights.

Getting your cortisol levels up in the morning to have us be full of energy when we need it and adding an optimal nutrition that favors sleep is a great way to prepare for night time from the get go.

Just be careful not to rely on too much sugar. You do not want to force your cortisol levels into overdrive, as that will overwork your adrenal glands (which

produce both adrenaline and cortisol), leaving you exhausted by the afternoon. You do, however, want to get enough drive to have well-balanced energy. And that works best with proteins and healthy fats.

So try to avoid sugar as much as possible, particularly at breakfast. You can exchange it by using stevia or cinnamon, and avoid processed cereals, which are full of sugars and artificial sweeteners.

It's important to also add protein, such as eggs, and some fibre and healthy fats, like avocado on toast, to give you the well-balanced energy you need.

When you snack, make sure you use protein and healthy fat snacks, such as nuts (without additives like salt), seaweed crackers or kale crackers. There are a lot of healthy options without sugar or salt.

What else should you be looking at?

There are certain vitamins and minerals that can aid sleep. But before reaching for supplements you should always consider food as your primary resource as it's easier to digest nutrients directly from a natural substance.

Magnesium

When it comes to sleep your best friend is definitely magnesium. Magnesium has been shown to reduce cortisol, which we know can be troublesome for sleep. On top of that magnesium is known to have muscle relaxing capabilities and so it is often a pretty easy solution to create balance and calm in your body.³

You can get more magnesium via supplements of course but first off I always advocate looking at your diet and including some foods that are rich in what you need. Foods that hold a lot of magnesium include spinach, almonds, black beans, bananas, avocados and even dark chocolate (70% chocolate content or more to avoid artificial sweeteners)!

One of the best magnesium boosters is bananas and they can be used in so many ways. My favourite is banana tea, which you can drink before bed to help you get a good night's sleep. I've provided a simple recipe:

Take a banana and cut off the tips. Leave the peel on as that is loaded with magnesium.

Wash the outside of the banana to get rid of any dirt or pesticides.

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/6527092>

Boil the whole banana for three minutes.

Strain the water and drink it as tea.

Note however, that you don't have to eat bananas to get a good dose of magnesium. Don't forget that your skin is also a huge organ and can absorb minerals as well. Epsom salts are a great source of magnesium and you can use them in your bath. You can also find magnesium sprays and powders for your skin.

Other Vitamins

Vitamin C is important for different reasons. First of all it can help you to function better when sleep deprived (which is not the aim of this book but we cannot expect miracles from day one). Studies have shown that Vitamin C can improve your memory despite sleep deprivation.⁴ It also helps to keep cortisol levels low, rather than having them spike out of distress due to sleep deprivation. It has also been discovered that a lack of Vitamin C is connected to shorter sleep duration. And as we want you to sleep an optimal amount of time, this vitamin should definitely be on your watch list.⁵

A certain form of Vitamin B12 called methylcobalamin can help melatonin production and therefore make it easier for you to sleep. However, most of the time you would have to get your dose through a purified form to get that certain type and hence you should discuss this with your healthcare practitioner after a blood work analysis to see whether you actually need it or not and to have it prescribed.⁶

Low levels of Vitamin D have been linked both to shorter sleep duration and lower sleep efficiency, meaning a good balance of our sleep phases.⁷ Those of us

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25724146>

⁵ <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019566631300024X>

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8981490>

⁷ <http://www.journalsleep.org/ViewAbstract.aspx?pid=29865>

who live in Northern climates hardly get enough of this vitamin, as it is dependent on sunlight, and so we must stock up on it either through foods, sunlight exposure or supplements. Very often though in order to get a good quality Vitamin D supplement, it has to be prescribed by your healthcare practitioner as you can potentially overdose. So bear that in mind and discuss it with your specialist.

Support your gut health

The gut is basically the second brain in our body. There is an incredible amount of nerve connections between brain and gut and your whole body's system is dependent on its health. So in order to get great sleep, gut health is an important piece of the puzzle.

Here are a few easy tips to supporting gut health:

Make sure you have enough time to eat. No standing up eating, wolfing down take away food or sitting in front of the computer taking huge bites and gobbling them down without chewing. This all makes it incredibly difficult to digest and your gut will be in distress, needing loads of adrenalin and cortisol to give you more energy and hence it will linger in your body way too long for you to have a peaceful nighttime. So instead, make sure you sit down and keep distractions to a minimum. Chew your food until it is a paste so that your digestion is a breeze. Put down your fork and knife between each bite.

Avoid chlorine in your water. You want to keep healthy bacteria in your gut and chlorine is not helpful for that. So make sure you get a water filter that not only gets rid of the taste and smell of chlorine but the substance itself as well.

Beware of too many antibiotics as they produce changes in the microbial and metabolic patterns of the gut. A study has shown that the gut microbiota shows less capacity to absorb iron, digest certain foods and produce essential molecules for the organism when in contact with antibiotics.⁸ In layman's terms, this means that too many antibiotics make it more difficult for us to easily digest food, so use them sparingly or avoid them whenever you can. Your body will thank you for it.

⁸ <http://gut.bmj.com/content/62/11/1591>

Hydration

It is not only food that affects your sleep. What you drink is just as important.

If your body doesn't get enough fluids during the day it will crave them at night, even waking you up for it.

So I truly recommend drinking at least six glasses of water every day. However, if you are someone who has what feels like a pea-sized bladder then make sure you have your last drink at most an hour before going to bed.

Not drinking enough fluids is not the only issue. Some drinks, such as alcohol and caffeine, actually make you *more* dehydrated. So let's look at those two elements separately and how they affect sleep.

Caffeine

Caffeine is one of the main reasons a lot of people struggle with sleep issues. We are not only talking about your regular coffee or espresso or cappuccino. We also need to include cola and energy drinks. A glass of cola can affect you just as much as a 'plain coffee'. So be aware of that.

Caffeine takes a long time to digest and wear off. Depending on your metabolism, it can take up to six hours. So if you have a coffee or a drink with caffeine at or after dinner, and if you are sensitive to caffeine, then you will have trouble sleeping.

What I'd suggest is when you're doing your nutrition log to really mark up your caffeine and compare it to how you slept during those nights. Observe whether there is a relation between these two factors.

Some people aren't sensitive to caffeine at all and can have a coffee in the evening without a problem. But others might be a lot more affected than they realise and so it is a good starting point to observe your patterns and see if you have to make adjustments.

Alcohol

Alcohol can trick you into believing that it will be easier for you to fall asleep. And yes, alcohol can make you feel sleepy but it also has some important side effects on sleep.

Alcohol can interfere with deep, restorative sleep, and also REM sleep, which is when we are dreaming. Both are crucial for us to feel refreshed and rejuvenated. On average, an adult has five to six complete sleep cycles in a night. When under the

influence of alcohol though, it can be reduced to two, leaving you exhausted the next day.

On top of that, the liver starts working a couple of hours after alcohol intake. This process can wake you up in the middle of the night, making it difficult to go back to sleep.

Furthermore, you need to be aware that alcohol dehydrates you, causing your body to crave water and wake you up, as I discussed previously. But it also acts as a diuretic, meaning it makes you pee more often. So you will be waking up more often to go to the bathroom and then you will have to try to fall asleep again.

Again, this is very different from person to person. Some people have an easy time digesting their alcohol and are hardly influenced at all, whereas others react a lot more intensely.

So again, it is up to you to observe yourself to evaluate how much alcohol is affecting your sleep.

Sugary Drinks

Just like sugary snacks, sugary drinks, which are loaded with artificial sweeteners, can also keep you awake. Even fruit juices, which contain natural sugars, can interfere with your sleep. As with caffeine and alcohol, some people won't be bothered by too much sugar; others will react a lot. So be aware.

I would suggest that if you are a troubled sleeper (which you most likely are or you wouldn't be reading this book) try drinking just water for a week and see how your body feels afterwards and how it has affected your sleep.

Movement and Sleep

Exercise is healthy no matter what. Indeed, a study published in the *Mental Health and Physical Activity* journal has shown that two and a half hours of exercise a week can improve your sleep although the precise connection between the two is unknown.⁹ However, in the following paragraphs we will look at some of the possible explanations so that you can understand how to best plan your day to optimize your chances of a good night's sleep later on.

Evening Exercise – Yes or No?

⁹ <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1755296611000317>

You often hear that it isn't a good idea to exercise before sleep and this can be true in some cases. The logic behind this advice is that sleep occurs when our body's temperature lowers. Exercise makes us hot, so it can be trickier to cool down and go to sleep. On the other hand, it is not only the temperature of our body that relates to sleep, but the *rate* at which our body's temperature is lowering. Therefore, if you are very fit such that you easily find equilibrium after exercise, you may find that your higher body temperature results in your body cooling down more quickly, and hence, you fall asleep faster.

Some suggest that evening exercise can help aid sleep by allowing us to decompress and diffuse anxiety and stress. Having yourself being powered out can be an amazing feeling and you will simply drop off to sleep from happy exhaustion.

Keep in mind however, that if you are exercising to lose weight or gain muscle it doesn't make sense to work out in the evening when you are already tired. You're better off going to sleep. Your body is not going to perform in its work out as well as it could. However, if you are not too tired then you can absolutely try to work out in the evening.

Some people will not have any issues with evening exercise; they'll just go to bed and sleep. Others will struggle to sleep because the exercise has given their metabolism a kickstart and their heart rate is up, and there is just no way their body will calm down. Of course it makes a difference whether you are doing a high-cardio activity, such as swimming, or whether you do something less stimulating like a gentle yoga class.

It is really up to you to observe yourself to see how you react to evening exercise. So how can you figure out what is best for you?

You have to experiment. Log the times you exercise and see whether it affects your sleep. This will be different for every individual and well worth paying attention to.

Why Movement?

In general, movement favours sleep because it helps you to de-stress. It's especially helpful if you go outside for a walk during the day. The extra sunlight helps to set your biological clock so that your body temperature goes up in the afternoon and will cool down nicely in the evening.

So try to increase your movement outside, even if it means parking a bit further from the office, taking the dog for one more walk or taking an evening stroll around the block.

Studies have shown that the best times to work out are in the morning hours.¹⁰ Movement in the morning is helpful as that means your body has all day to break down the cortisol in your body that naturally comes with exercise. Once evening comes, the cortisol will be broken down and the melatonin will have a breeze kicking in and you will start to feel nice and tired.

Here is a morning exercise you can do that won't take a lot of time: It's a technique called Tabata training and you do it right when you get up.

You basically move for 20 seconds, doing jumping jacks, squats or something similar that gets your heart pumping, then rest for 20 seconds, and then move again. You will do this for 4 minutes in total. This will elevate your cortisol levels in the morning, enhance your total body performance throughout the day, and help melatonin to kick in at night so you can sleep.

Your Environment

Where we are and what we surround ourselves with, whether in our home or at our workplace, can have a deep impact on our sleep. In the following section we will dig into the major environmental factors that could interfere with your sleep so that you can watch out for them and make adjustments if needed.

Your Home

Let's first take a look at the area where we likely spend most of our time: our house or apartment and the different rooms in there.

You create your home to be a warm and welcoming place, and with that, you may unwittingly be affecting your sleep patterns. So let's start with one element that might not be obvious but which can have a huge effect on sleep, depending on how sensitive you are.

Fragrances

Any air fresheners are most likely full of chemicals that can mess up your hormones and influence your brain and sleep. Over 70% of perfumes are known to include phthalates, which are endocrine (hormone) disrupters.¹¹ They have serious

¹⁰ <http://www.news.appstate.edu/2010/11/29/study-shows-resistance-training-benefits-cardiovascular-health/>

¹¹ <http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-14875/how-perfume-messes-with-your-hormones-even-if-you-dont-wear-it.html>

consequences on our health as they lead to miscommunication within our metabolic system and connections. Research has even shown that they are linked to earlier birthrates, meaning babies arriving before their due term, than in women who have a lower level of phthalates in their bodies.¹² It is not a far stretch that they can interfere with your natural hormonal balance, which is necessary for sleeping well.

It is therefore a good idea to remove any artificial air fresheners from your bedroom at least, and preferably from your whole home if you are seriously struggling with sleep.

This includes looking at your laundry detergent, your cleaning products, fragrant candles and especially products that come into contact with your skin, such as shampoo, soap and body lotions.

This may now leave you with the impression that your whole household will be very bland but there are great alternatives out there. Look into a trusted brand of essential oils, or even better, dried lavender or fresh plants and you will find chemical free replacements. You can also find brands that provide fragrant free cosmetics and body products.

I am not saying this should necessarily be your first step, but if you are having trouble with sleep then do consider this, as the effects of phthalates cannot be denied.

Light

As I mentioned previously, our pineal gland, which is located in our brain, is sensitive to light and it regulates our circadian rhythm, otherwise known as our biological clock. Some people are extremely sensitive to light and only a small beacon of light in the morning can be enough for them to wake up earlier than necessary or make it hard for them to fall asleep.

So make sure your bedroom is pitch, pitch black in case you find you are sensitive to light.

You don't need to buy expensive black out blinds immediately. If you aren't

¹² <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-chemicals-cosmetics-idUSBRE9AH15620131118>

certain, you can use black trash bags at first. They might not look as stylish but they do an amazing job and, needless to say, are a fraction of the cost.

As an alternative, you can use an eye mask if you feel comfortable wearing one. However, as our skin (and not only our eyes) also absorbs light, making your bedroom pitch black is better than using eye masks. This way your entire body will be 'told' to rest.

Now let's talk about blue light for a second. Natural blue light, which has shorter waves, is all around and is good for us. It is why we perceive the sky as blue.

However, artificial blue light has a much shorter wavelength and is therefore a lot more intense. It is usually found in screen and LED lights. When those waves hit your retina they interrupt the melatonin process and that makes it harder for you to sleep.

So what can you do about it?

There is one obvious solution:

No screens one hour before bed.

However, you are not completely helpless if you need to work late on your computer. Recently a lot of apps and free software has come out to reduce the blue tones in your screen. F.Lux for example, is an extension for chrome which adapts to your time and slowly filters out any blue and green tones that could keep you awake. You will notice that your screen will turn more and more yellow and orange, filtering out the artificial blue light tones. It is not ideal but a lot better than nothing and you can give it a try when you have to work late on your computer.

A great idea is to integrate candlelight into your routine. Instead of switching on your super harsh bathroom lights, get into the habit of taking off your makeup and washing your face at night by candlelight. Not only is it romantic, it really helps you to wind down and get your body prepped for sleep.

It is also important to note that different people have different degrees of sensitivity towards this. But if you are someone struggling with sleep, give it a shot and banish screens from your sight before your bedtime.

Finally, I want to quickly mention that if you are constantly falling asleep in front of your television it is because you are most likely exhausted. So that isn't a good sign because it is completely unnatural and means you are under sleep deprivation.

Here is why:

Television is stimulating to your brain, as it cannot completely differentiate between fiction and fact. So if you are watching *the Fast and the Furious* your body

will amp up on cortisol, whether you want to or not.

You don't even need an action film to do the trick. The lights and sounds are enough and so when you crash in front of the screen it is classified as an involuntary act of falling asleep and it is your body telling you that you overdid it. So in other words, save the action flicks for another time, like the afternoon or weekends, when sleep isn't so much of a priority.

Finding the Right Mattress

When it comes to beds and mattresses, most people don't like to spend a lot of money. We'll easily spend good money on cars, clothes, vacations, food and more, but not on the place where we sleep. Even though we spend about one third of our day – and therefore one third of our lives – in bed. Crazy, isn't it?

Do you spend that much time in your car each day? I think not (or rarely).

So you'd think we'd want to have the best quality mattress possible.

However, a lot of people just don't understand how important mattresses are and how much they can support or interfere with your sleep. They do this in two ways:

1. Comfort

If you have a mattress that makes your shoulder ache, causing you to frequently change position, you will never have great sleep cycles simply because of discomfort and your urge to move. That means that your light sleep phases, such as your REM cycles, which are so important for psychological and physiological regeneration, are cut short and leave you unrefreshed in the morning. It is so simple yet we completely underestimate this.

2. Toxicity

This is a topic really close to my heart. A lot of mattresses are composed of toxic materials, emitting fumes at night which your skin and your lungs absorb. This can cause long term cell and health damage, as well as mess with our neurons and hormones at night, causing us to not sleep well.

This sounds scary and frankly it is.

Here's a list of some of the worst materials used in conventional mattresses:

Polyurethane foam (petroleum-based material that emits Volatile organic compounds)

Formaldehyde (linked to asthma, allergies, and lung cancer)

Flame retardants (linked to cancer and nervous system disorders) such as Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers, which were very recently banned in many countries. Unfortunately, that's not much help since other equally toxic chemicals are easily used instead, without any real regulation for health hazards.

Boric Acid (roach killer)¹³

I am not saying that you have to immediately throw out your mattress and get a new one without those elements because I am completely aware that this is a costly matter. But I do want to draw your attention to some elements that you should look out for once you do decide to get a new mattress and/or bed.

Stay away from any artificial materials, such as foam, latex, or plastic. Anything that is not natural and that you wouldn't want to wear on your or your child's skin all day does not belong in a mattress.

Look for brands that use certified organic materials.

Take a look at each layer of how the beds and mattresses are built so you can truly see what is in there.

Avoid mattresses with metal in them or bed frames with metal as they can enhance electronic-magnetic fields and radiation.

There are beds and mattresses on the market that are made of 100% natural materials and use washed and allergen-free horse hair or wool for the mattress stuffing for example. So should you need a new mattress any time soon, keep this in mind, as your body is in close contact with it every day.

Electro Magnetic Fields

Let's think about this for a second:

Any device using strong electro magnetic frequencies and artificial radiations (such as mobile phones, e-readers, toys, baby monitors, alarm systems or tablets) is advised to be at least one inch away from our bodies at all times

'As of 2011, the WHO has classified mobile phones (and any wireless device that uses microwaves to communicate) as a group2b risk", which means that they

¹³ <http://redandhoney.com/is-your-mattress-toxic-hidden-dangers-in-your-sleeping-environment/>

are “possibly carcinogenic to humans”.¹⁴

Though there is limited evidence that this is the case, there is growing concern that our increased dependence on electronics is harmful to our health. Indeed, in September 2016 the city of Berkeley, California demanded that cell phone companies be legally required to alert customers about possible dangers to radiation exposure. The cell phone companies are challenging the ruling, and though it is difficult to find hard and fast evidence, there seems to be sufficient anecdotal evidence that we should at least consider limiting our exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Our bodies are full of currents. Our brain is constantly emitting electrical signals and so it is not surprising that if those are interrupted by external electromagnetic fields it affects the brain’s function and can impede our sleep.

Typical human-made electromagnetic fields are radiating at around 50hz. Our brain, to be in an optimal state of rest should be at 2hz.¹⁵

Protecting yourself against such radiation is becoming more and more popular and newer houses and modern (often high end) hotels also offer the option to switch off any electric currents that might interfere with your body.

So how can you help your brain to avoid being interrupted by electromagnetic currents in your own house?

Make sure you don’t keep your mobile close to you. Preferably even in another room on airplane mode, which is going to help you to ‘switch off’ as well.

The same is true for your tablet of course.

Switch off your internet router at night. You do not need wifi when you are sleeping because well . . . you are sleeping!

Go back to using a traditional alarm clock instead of using your mobile.

Unplug your cordless phone, as those radiation waves can be surprisingly strong as well.

¹⁴ http://www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/pr/2011/pdfs/pr208_E.pdf

¹⁵ http://www.hese-project.org/de/emf/WissenschaftForschung/Tan_Prof.%20Dr._Uner/CELLALEXTAN.pdf

If you find that you are very sensitive to Electro Magnetic Fields then go to your circuit box and turn off the circuits that run through your bedroom. Very often you can switch off only the ones that run through your plugs and you can keep the lights on, for example.

If you have a baby, try to go without a baby monitor. These devices emit scary amounts of EMFs, which are not healthy for you or your baby. On top of that, unless you live in a palace, you will hear your baby when he or she needs you. They have great lungs!

Make sure you keep doing this for at least two weeks to see how you are reacting.

We are all different and for some people EMFs do not have an impact on their sleep at all. But for those of you who have trouble sleeping it is worth a try if it can solve your sleep issues. It really doesn't take much of an effort and the benefits may be significant if it supports your sleep and well-being.

Power Naps and Yoga

Different people have different sleep needs. And so one question I am often asked is about power naps.

I would definitely recommend a power nap instead of a cup of coffee (or three). While you may think coffee is waking you up, studies have shown that memory and motoric learning capacities are still dulled in spite of caffeine intake.¹⁶ On the other hand, these capacities are restored after having had a nap. Power naps will leave you more alert and efficient, not only immediately after the nap, but also for hours to come.

So how do you power nap best? Here are some guidelines for you:

Wherever you choose to sleep, make sure that it is dark. As I explained before some people are highly sensitive to light, so an eye mask can do miracles.

I'd also recommend using a blanket as your body temperature will drop slightly.

Keep it to 20 minutes, 30 minutes maximum. This will leave you restored but not groggy.

¹⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2603066/pdf/nihms65981.pdf>

If you are serious about getting a regular energy boost, try to stick to the same time every day, preferably an hour or so after lunch.

Now, for those of you who know you'll have difficulty relaxing enough to lie still and nap, or those of you who work and are unable to take a nap at the office or workplace (for most people you'd be lucky even to find a place to lie down, other than maybe the boardroom table!) there are other options. Relaxation exercises, such as iRest exercises which we discussed in Chapter 3, are amazing. These exercises are extremely powerful and can take only 16 minutes to do. As you get more and more used to them you will be able to achieve the resting state - similar to deep sleep brain wave patterns - more quickly. You can do the exercises when seated so that you can stay in your office or go outside on a bench and do them there. The instructions for iRest are simple to follow and the benefits are immense, helping your brain to balance itself so it can focus on both halves equally. When done right these exercises produce results that are similar to those experienced during your most powerful, restorative part of deep sleep.

Yoga nidra is another possible option if you can't manage to nap during the day. An article in the guardian claimed that one hour of yoga nidra is just as powerful as four hours of sleep at night.¹⁷ Whilst I am not sure about that, I am certain that it is a healthier and more powerful alternative to coffee or any other artificial stimulant, such as sugary energy drinks or pills.

Don't forget that you have a free guided iRest meditation in the Boss Box. Also, I have added a link for you in the appendices where you can test out a 20 minute meditation of mine for free and hopefully it will help you to re-boost your afternoon.

If neither napping, iRest, nor yoga nidra is your cup of tea (or if it just wouldn't work at your place of work), then go outside and have a walk. You will be amazed at how much it helps you to get back on track. It will fill your body with fresh oxygen and boost your circulation, and daylight will give your cortisol level a little nudge to keep you stimulated.

¹⁷ <http://guardianlv.com/2013/08/how-to-get-4-hours-of-deep-sleep-in-only-one/>

CHAPTER 5

Sleep Disorders and Body Dysfunctions

Our body does the best it can to help us to be as healthy as possible. But sometimes there are connections that can go wrong. In this chapter we will look at what the three main sleep disorders are so that should you recognize yourself in the scenario, you can ask your doctor about them.

We will also look at hormonal imbalances, which can play a huge part as well when it comes to sleep.

Sleep Apnea

The most frequent sleep disorder is definitely sleep apnea. There are a lot of different types of sleep apnea but I want to give you the gist here of what it is and what you should watch out for.

Sleep apnea is basically a condition whereby you stop breathing momentarily when you are sleeping. In other words, you fall asleep, you stop breathing, your brain wakes you up, you fall asleep again and so forth. These episodes are so tiny that you don't even notice them most of the time.

Why does this occur? It can be that a part of your throat is physically closing up (very often those patients are also very loud snorers) or it can be neurologically related. So if you are someone who gets enough sleep theoretically but wakes up being exhausted, then talk to your doctor to see about being tested for sleep apnea.

Restless Leg

The name of this sleep disorder is pretty straightforward. People with restless leg notice that their leg has a life of its own come evening or once they start to relax.

Their leg keeps jerking and it can make it very difficult to fall asleep. It often gets worse with sleep deprivation and so patients are stuck in a vicious circle of not being able to sleep because of their leg and their condition not getting better because they can't sleep.

Again, if you think you might have this disorder talk to your doctor and discuss treatment with him or her.

Circadian Rhythm Disorders

Our circadian rhythm is basically our biological clock. It tells us when we

should go into sleep mode and when we should be active. It works with light and also with our body temperature.

So in an optimal case our body wakes up with light, cortisol kicks in, we live our day, and in the evening cortisol levels fall while melatonin levels rise, stimulated by our pineal gland's sensitivity to light reduction, and leading to sleep.

Some people though have a circadian rhythm disorder - most often a delayed circadian rhythm.

So what happens is that although their pineal gland realises that night is approaching, the lowering of their cortisol levels and the elevation of melatonin doesn't occur until two to three hours later. This results in people who are hardcore night owls, who love being up until 3 in the morning, who sleep in until midday.

This sleep pattern is obviously not easy to pull off, but once you know what is going on there are great ways to treat circadian rhythms, such as with melatonin supplements or bright light therapy. Bright light therapy is basically exposing you to a certain frequency of light that helps your pineal gland to regulate your body clock. It could be enough to have you be exposed to the light whilst having ready for work and having breakfast.

Again I would consult your doctor if you suspect being on a different biological clock than most people.

Hormonal Imbalances

Hormonal imbalances can be responsible for creating a lot of havoc, and not only in women as you might suspect. Men can have hormonal imbalances as well. They not only take a toll on your digestion and your psychological state, but they can also throw your whole cortisol levels out of whack, making sleep really difficult.

If you have already implemented all the lifestyle changes above and are still struggling, and are noticing as well that you have a hard time with your digestion, I'd consider the following steps.

You can start by first cutting out gluten, dairy and eggs completely for at least two weeks and see what happens. If you wish, you can slowly re-introduce them one by one over four days and see how your body reacts.

What does food have to do with hormones? Those types of foods are often connected to digestive distress and trigger a stream of cortisol, which leads to adrenal fatigue. This in turn provokes a crash in energy mid-day, but can then have your adrenal glands firing up again in the middle of the night, leaving you wired but incapable of sleeping.

I'd suggest you look up a nutritionist if you are feeling this might be your case and have them help you with this.

If that still doesn't make a difference, what I'd suggest is that when you go for your next check up, whether with your regular health practitioner or a naturopath, you have them look at your hormones including estrogen and progesterone levels as they can also interfere with sleep. Your healthcare provider should know how to read those levels and how to balance them out again.

Another key factor to look for is your thyroid gland and its production, as this can also have a massive influence on sleep. An over or under productive gland can make it either very difficult for you to sleep or create the opposite effect where you are exhausted all of the time. Either way, these are symptoms and consequences of metabolic chaos due to either biochemical or emotional stress. It is therefore always advised to start by eliminating emotional stress, adjust your diet and then work your way towards what else can be adjusted. When working with my clients, that is the way we proceed towards healthy sleep.

Pregnancy

During pregnancy so much is going on in your body in order to grow a healthy baby. Hormone levels are out of whack, our body changes, it becomes difficult to feel comfortable at night when sleeping, and we start worrying about labour, birth and of course the huge responsibility of bringing a new person into this world.

It is, however, really important to get enough rest during pregnancy.

First of all, it will help your labour. A recent study by the University of California* found that women who slept fewer than 6 hours per night had longer labours and were 4.5 times more likely to have caesarean deliveries.

On top of that, your sleep patterns can already influence your baby's sleeping pattern. Stress levels can be transmitted to your baby. It has been shown that soon-to-be mothers who were troubled sleepers often had babies who were waking up frequently at night, and not just for the first few weeks, but over a long time span. This is likely in part because the baby has already had a fragmented sleep pattern through the parent *in utero*, but also because once born those parents have a lighter sleep and tend to be more hasty to react to their little ones when they stir. A baby can be really loud when sleeping and often, without knowing or intending it, we actually disturb them in their sleep and hence establish a fragmented sleeping pattern.

Again this is not always the case but it has been noticed more and more often.¹⁸
So how do you ensure you get enough sleep during pregnancy?

Apart from the general sleep hygiene, which we have already talked about, the following is especially important for pregnant women to do:

Include movement and exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, unless you have been told otherwise by your healthcare provider.

Sleep on your left side to facilitate circulation for you and your baby. Lying on your back should be avoided for long spans of time as the weight of the baby can press on the vein that returns blood from your lower body to your heart.

Use a pillow between your legs to give you support.

If you need naps during the day make sure they are not too late so that you won't have too many difficulties falling asleep at night.

Don't think, however, that you can *sleep a lot during pregnancy to prepare you for the sleepless nights to come*. . . This is WRONG in so many ways.

One thing to remember: Don't think that you can stock up on sleep! This is impossible. Sleeping for eight hours on Monday does not mean that you need to sleep only four hours on Tuesday. Our bodies do not work that way. Having a newborn is tiring and a challenge, but do everything you can to get some rest, take breaks, and gather energy. Use your family members, your neighbours, and any other support network you can muster. This is not only for your benefit, but for your baby's as well.

Something else that can help with both your and your baby's sleep is to establish routines and stick to them. Give your little one enough breaks during the day. Everything is new and the amount of new information newborns have to take in and the rate at which their brain is developing is mindboggling. Watch your baby's sleep signals to make sure they will get enough rest while adjusting to day versus night as quickly as possible. This will make it easier for them to naturally sleep for longer stretches. I am not talking about strict sleep training here but using simple tools to set up your day and environment. For more on this, I have added an ebook

¹⁸ http://mobile.nytimes.com/blogs/well/2016/04/05/parents-with-sleep-problems-think-their-children-have-them-too/?_r=0&referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fm.facebook.com

and a mini no-cry solutions course in the Boss Box.

Being pregnant can be an exciting time, and being a new parent is an amazing and memorable time in a person's life, but if we are not getting enough sleep, these experiences will be difficult to thoroughly enjoy. So it is important that you prioritize sleep and rest during pregnancy as much as you can.

CHAPTER 6

Pulling It All Together So You Can Succeed

In this chapter I want to pull everything we have seen so far together and remind you of the most important components that will change your entire attitude towards and vision of sleep. Here are the key things to remember before putting together your sleep regime:

1. Sleep wants to be your ally. Nature has done everything possible to force our body to sleep so we can survive. We are built to sleep well and heal ourselves through sleep. So if you have trouble sleeping, you are at a disconnect with your sleep. It may be that your mind is shutting the door on sleep, making it hard for it to come, or it could be external factors that make it difficult for sleep to arrive easily.

Hopefully this book has managed to make you aware of what it is that is interfering with your sleep.

2. Sleep wants to help you so try to not perceive it as a nuisance that is stealing hours of your day. Rather, embrace it, welcome it and love it! That can be difficult to do sometimes.

Something you could try, which might sound a little bit crazy but is extremely powerful, is writing a letter to your sleep.

In that letter I want you to apologize to sleep for not treating it better, for taking it for granted, for being so frustrated with it and for not liking it.

And then turn it around and write a love letter to it. Tell your sleep that you love how it helps you, how it makes you feel stronger, nicer, more powerful and simply better. Tell it that you are grateful that it takes care of your body, mind and health.

Write this down. Don't just think it but write it. As we mentioned earlier, your brain perceives written words more vividly and differently than mere thoughts.

3. Now, if you are implementing all of these exercises in order to optimize your body and lifestyle for sleep but still feel exhausted in the morning, then look up a medical sleep specialist to run some tests on you.

They will look at your hormone levels, your breathing when you are sleeping and your brain wave lengths. This can only be done at a sleep center, but again I would first try to embrace your sleep from within

before coming to the conclusion that your body has a malfunction requiring medical intervention.

Remember, our bodies are beautiful constructions, with their parts working in harmony together and helping you to make the most of yourself so you can live a full life and just be happy.

4. Listen to your body. Watch how it reacts and get to know it on a whole new level. It is working hard every single second that you are alive and you owe it respect.

Your heart is beating non-stop. Your blood is constantly flowing, your brain is never truly resting; all of that hard work so you can live, create, love and experience amazing moments here on earth.

So treat this incredible vessel that you have been given with respect and patience.

5. Prioritizing your sleep and therefore yourself is vital and not selfish!

Understand that you are here for a reason and that you and your personal strengths are a gift to this world.

You have strengths nobody else has.

You can see things nobody else can. And no matter what your past is, nobody and nothing can take entire control of your future. That is only you!

Don't waste time worrying how others may perceive you. That is their business – not yours. You need to be okay with how you perceive yourself! And if you don't like it, you simply change it!

Do whatever it takes to change into the person you want to actually be because you can. Who you are is your decision. Nobody has more control over your future than you.

6. Remember that you are a good person.

Remember that if you come from a place of honesty, you are doing good in the world.

Remember that it isn't your fault that your sleep is disconnected.

Remember that it is okay not to be able to control everything.

Remember the real fire inside of you and let it ignite and drive you.

AFTERWORD

You are not alone in this. I won't let you be.

This book is meant to give you insight into the most frequent issues causing insomnia and to help you identify a possible sleep disorder. If you have any concerns whatsoever that you might not be sleeping because of a sleep disorder, please see your health care provider!

Even though this book only scratches the surface of the issues surrounding sleep, I know it can be a lot to digest. At the same time, I also know that right now you are possibly on fire and totally motivated to implement all the habit changes that you have just read about.

And that is why I want to touch on those habits and help you to stay on track with them.

Our body is very receptive to habits, whether they are good or bad. We love same old, same old and anything outside of that is often perceived as uncomfortable and rather negative and our whole core wants to drag us back into our old patterns.

The good news is that it takes only 21 days for habits to become a lot easier, and if you stick with them for six weeks you will be over the hump as that's when habits become automatic for you.

In this book I gave you the tools to dig out what the true motivation is for you, but sometimes understanding what that motivation is and asking yourself the right questions can be difficult to achieve on your own because we all have blindspots that are keeping us from growing. And that is what good coaches are for.

They ask you questions that you might not have thought to ask yourself.

They reveal your blind spots and they show you the dark and dusty corners of your mind that you don't usually go to but which are full of hidden gems or blocks that stop you from going out of your comfort zone and keep you from thriving in a way that you ever have.

Sleep thrives on peace of mind and that can be difficult to achieve by yourself.

So try the exercises that I have given you but don't despair if you notice that you cannot quite get there on your own. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

If you need support please join my Facebook Group or connect with me personally. Our community is here to share wins, goals and to push yourself and the network.

You will be in a tribe that ‘gets it’ that when you say you can’t sleep, it doesn’t just mean you are a bit tired, but that it makes you want to cry.

You will find yourself in a community that truly understands what it feels like to be constantly tired, and these people are there to help you and make you feel safe – not like a crazy person.

The community and I are also there to catch you when the honeymoon period is over.

What do I mean by that?

At first we are all motivated and want to implement it all and yes we probably have successes and we think: “Right! I did it!”

And then the honeymoon period blows over, we slowly fall back into our old pattern and our issues all come back. And we give up.

Not here.

You have goals that move you forward and I have created a system for you to remind you of that.

Once you have established your goal (alone or with our community or your coach) you can register it on the website and you will get regular, motivational emails, reminding you of your particular goal to keep you on track.

It is like having your personal cheerleader in your inbox and it’s completely free.

Simply surf to sleeplikeaboss.com/book and you will get access to this service and so, so much more.

And the ‘so much more’ will be laid out to you in the following appendices which you can download on the website to use.

Enjoy and good night!

Christine

APPENDICES OR WHAT I LIKE TO CALL

The Boss Box

To download all of the worksheets and the helpful tutorial videos in the Boss Box,
go to

sleeplikeaboss.com/book

and enter “Book” in the coupon field.



