



## Sleepless in...Wherever?

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert **Susie Mantell**

*"...sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care." -Shakespeare (sleeve: Archaic, a skein)*

Do you sometimes crawl into bed longing only for sweet respite in deep, replenishing sleep, close your eyes and snuggle in -- only to find that the movie in your head begins?

Sleep deprivation is now pervasive in a culture demanding more and more of us all. Because Mother Nature has hard-wired us with a very clever stress-hormone response system providing expandable (albeit not unlimited) reserves of energy in emergencies, when habitually sleep-deprived the system is literally "stressed" beyond efficiency. Overtaxed and depleted, we become more susceptible to illness, depression, forgetfulness, irritability, headache, etc., and self-esteem, pain tolerance and positive outlook may be compromised. Sleep-deprivation diminishes mental clarity so much that in studies of fatigue-at-the-wheel, delayed reflexes were found to equal or exceed those of driving while intoxicated. This over-draft of the sleep account nationwide is resulting in a society working longer hours and often exhausted, achy, ill, and in some cases, more than a little cranky. Somehow at bedtime we expect to suddenly screech to a halt a day that has taken us in twelve directions at 90 miles an hour, and drift into blissful asleep. Grandma was right: "Everything always looks a little brighter after a good night's sleep."

In some instances, health issues and medications can cause insomnia so it's always important to talk with your physician and rule out, or address, any medical cause. For everyday impediments to restful sleep, below are some simple, drug-free suggestions to relieve the stress of restlessness and make The Sandman's job easier to help you to enjoy more peaceful, restorative sleep.

*"I put a piece of paper under my pillow, and when I could not sleep  
I wrote in the dark. - Henry David Thoreau*

### Five Ways to Muffle Mental Chatter

1. **Inhale gently** into the belly, imagining shimmering light cascading over your head...shoulders, dissolving words and images, any aches it finds along the way.
2. **Visualize bits of "chatter"** floating on a raft, downstream and out of sight.
3. **See and sense yourself at the shore** writing worries in wet sand, watching the waves gently wash them away, releasing them to the sea.
4. **Sail worries out a window** in your mind on long, silk scarves.

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**5. Spend time before bed in non-work-related relaxation** (and not in the light of the computer, which can stimulate brain activity.) Try a warm bath, journaling, a light magazine, foot-massage, or gentle time talking with someone you care for. No news is good news. What's the last thing you do before bed? Without question, I support being informed, not as the last thing before bed. [ Tips for Coping with the Stress of World Events: [www.relaxintuit.com/tips.asp](http://www.relaxintuit.com/tips.asp)

### **Aches & Pains Keeping you Awake?**

Sometimes a mattress or pillow is too hard, soft, high or low. When's the last time your mattresses was turned and rotated? (*Do this carefully please-- and with help.*)

### **Too Cold or Hot? Near the Wall or Not?**

Adjust accordingly. Most people sleep best in a room that is a bit cool and in soft fabrics. Perhaps you'd like to try a fluffy comforter. Or maybe you prefer snug-as-a-bug-tightly-tucked sheets. Which side of the bed do you prefer? White bed-linens --or bright colors? Soft florals--or classic stripes. Cotton? Flannel? Silk? Experiment.

### **Stuffy Doze?**

Make sure the room is cool enough. Reduce common bedroom allergens such as dust mites, mold and feathers. Ask an allergist for suggestions, but be sure to ask about potential side-effects. Many decongestants include sympathomimetics which are also Central Nervous System stimulants. You may breathe better -- but be doing it wide awake! Some nasal sprays also create "rebound reactions" over time. Be an informed consumer. Try steaming before bed, or hot chamomile or ginger tea, (Not caffeinated tea, and not too much liquid before bed.)

### **Full Stomach or Full Bladder?**

In addition to causing discomfort, digestion initiates a metabolic boost that can hinder sleep. Ask your doctor if a light snack containing calcium or tryptophan might help you. Think of dreamland as, 'a road trip.' Plan ahead. If you wake to use the bathroom, open your eyes only enough to see your way safely. Drift gently back to sleep.

### **Is it Hot in Here, or is it Me?**

When sleep is elusive for women, hormonal activity may be in the mix. For women in their 40's and 50's internal "climate changes" begin. Ask your physician about medicinal or herbal preparations, and which stress-reduction tools can help diminish your menopausal symptoms.

### **Sick & Tired?**

When ill, the body calls the shots. Extra rest provides immune function more energy.

### **Noisy Neighbors?**

Try a small "white noise" machine, available in catalogs and stores. It creates an unobtrusive background that 'absorbs' sound. You may need to courteously and respectfully open a dialogue with your neighbor and try to arrive at a compromise. (*e.g. "Drum practice before 10 PM only."*)

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### Fibromyalgia? (aka FMS)

Fibromyalgia Syndrome is a painful connective tissue disorder that's episodic in nature. There are widely varying approaches, as FMS is not fully understood. It's thought by some to be associated with low serotonin levels, environmental sensitivities, "leaky gut" syndrome and/or the Alpha-Delta Sleep Disorder in which "awake" brain activity abruptly interrupts sleep. For a few FMS tips, see: <http://www.relaxintuit.com/tips.asp>

### Snoring and/or Sleep Apnea?

Snoring can be caused by a variety of factors, and can also be incredibly frustrating. There are a few gadgets that may help, including a sinus strip to open airways, sound monitors that vibrate to "nudge" the snorer, re-positioning the head or turning the snorer on his/her side. Sleep Apnea is a sleep disorder characterized by breath-holding, gasping, snoring, snorts and sometimes extremely deep sleep. It should be treated and can be diagnosed in a sleep disorders clinic. Ask your physician or perhaps call a local university hospital.

### Medication Side-Effects?

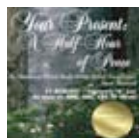
It's amazing how little we're told of potential side-effects like drowsiness, agitation, dry-mouth, diuresis, stomach upset, etc. Read labels and consult your pharmacist. "PM" preparations often contain anti-histamine to cause sleepiness. Rarely, short-term sleep medication may be appropriate but psychological, or physical dependency can be serious problems too, so seek professional medical advice and be monitored closely.

### Too Much Energy Giving you a "Second Wind?"

We need darkness for sleep, daylight for activity, and routine to reinforce the mind/body's circadian rhythm (day/night cycle.) Try dimming lights an hour before bed. Bright computer screens at night may send a 'daytime' signal to the pineal gland and cause wakefulness. Monitor your use of caffeine, including colas and chocolate (!) and observe to see what feels right for you. Try a warm bath, chamomile tea, aromatherapy, massage. Use your bed only for sleep and sex, exercise early in the day rather than at night, try meditation, counting backwards by 3s, browsing magazines, a relaxation CD or soothing music. [NOTE: Stress-relief expert Susie Mantell's award-winning relaxation CD, "Your Present: A Half-Hour of Peace" is clinically-approved in distinguished medical centers to enhance deep, restorative sleep. Order at [www.relaxintuit.com/CD.asp](http://www.relaxintuit.com/CD.asp) ]

### Pop Quiz: What are 3 things you could change slightly, to support better sleep?

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## END OF THIS TIP##