



Sleep, Worries & Mental Chatter

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

The average person needs a lot more sleep than (s)he gets, and we're paying for it.

Worries and mental chatter drain energy and focus. Whether working with CEO's or surgeons, inner-city homeless parents or suburban soccer moms, I meet people experiencing difficulty falling and/or staying asleep. Many complain of restless nights, waking up feeling as if they'd been run over by a truck.

We all experience bouts of sleeplessness from time to time. When worries arise it's nearly impossible to lie still amid all the mental chatter. Below are a few exercises I hope you will find helpful in achieving the gentle comfort of restful sleep you long for.

*"I reached for sleep and drew it round me like a blanket muffling pain
and thought together in the merciful dark." - Mary Stewart*

1. Worries Keeping You Up? Make a Worry List

Often when my mind is racing at bedtime, I realize it's full of things I'm trying to remember and frankly, I only need to remember to call the plumber once -- not 17 times. Make a Worry List and leave it on your night table to release all the mental chatter. Your worries may require attention, but not right now. Visualize sailing each worry out a window in your mind... on long, beautiful silk scarves.

2. Sleep Deprived? Try This Experiment:

For one week, put yourself to bed early enough to allow for 8-9 hours sleep. (*I know. But try it for a week.*) At bedtime, see and sense yourself at the shore. Listen to the waves... smell the salt air. Visualize writing all your worries in the wet sand, watching waves gently wash them away, releasing them to the sea. Observe what happens to your energy and outlook each day during the trial period.

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3. Clear Your Conscience for Sweeter Sleep

"Man should forget his anger before he lies down to sleep." - Mohandas Gandhi

- A clear conscience is worth its weight in -- well, it doesn't weigh a thing now, does it? Peace of mind is unquestionably compromised whenever we are responsible for the unhappiness of another.
- Healthy, restful sleep is infinitely easier to achieve by those who go to bed liking themselves and feeling they've done the best they could with that day.
- Do a quick internal scan and see if a gentle apology to a family member or colleague might make you (and them!) feel better, perhaps enhancing the deep restful sleep you need and deserve.
- Counting blessings... saying prayers... and wishing on stars are all ways in which we connect with what is meaningful for each of us, soothing away tiresome days.

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