



PRIMAL SLEEP

CORE MANUAL



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Author's Note

As someone who spent much of their teens and twenties sleepless, I know just how important a good night's sleep is. Lack of sleep can leave you feeling exhausted, impatient, snappy, depressed and lacking in concentration. Over time, lack of sleep can drastically change your life, negatively impacting your work performance, social life, personal relationships and general happiness.

After becoming sick of taking sleeping pills, I decided to take my insomnia into my own hands. I flushed the pills away, borrowed books from the library and used my sleepless nights to study sleep.

It wasn't long into my research before I began to realize that there were so many aspects of my lifestyle affecting my sleep that I could change and control. For starters, I was working late nights and going to bed at different times. I was also partial to the occasional cigarette before bed, something I then foolishly believed to be a relaxant.

Over the course of my study, I learned so many interesting things about sleep, like how the body responds to light exposure, and how hormones and brainwaves play a major role in the sleep-wake cycle. I learned about how diet affects sleep, and how humans lived 10,000 years ago compared to how they do in modern times. It was amazing; just learning more about sleep dramatically improved my sleep, and the fact that I had taken steps towards a cure had a positive effect on my state of mind. I finally felt like I was making progress in solving my insomnia.

It was also encouraging to learn that I wasn't alone in my experience. Research by the National Sleep Foundation shows that 62% of Americans suffer a sleepless night more than once a week. The more I looked into my own problem, the clearer it became that lack of sleep was a global problem.

It's easy to forget that sleeping pills are a modern invention, something we humans

haven't needed for 99.9% of our existence: If we lived for thousands of years without pills, then why have so many people become dependent on them in the last seventy or so years? The answer is our lifestyle – the way we live has become detrimental to the quality of our sleep.

My research changed my life in one fundamental way: It helped me turn the table in my favor. The knowledge gave me control. I had been given the power to cure my insomnia using natural means that I was already in ownership of.

I studied sleep through the ages, from hunter-gatherer to modern-man. I studied diet, pre- and post- agricultural revolution, and researched the impact of lifestyle changes such as the introduction of electricity, the evolution of the working day, changes in physical exercise and the introduction of cigarettes and alcohol consumption. The deeper I dug, the clearer and more alarming things became. The modern lifestyle is seriously affecting the quality of our sleep, so much so that millions of people are taking sleeping pills, and millions of others exist on a third of the sleep they should.

Using the knowledge I gained from my research and self-experimentation, I developed a program consisting of six core steps, which has not only cured my insomnia, but has since helped thousands of other people improve sleep health.

I discovered a wealth of other useful information too, information that promotes healthy sleep for those suffering stress and anxiety, those who have trouble sleeping in new environments, when traveling and sharing a bed, all of which I have shared in the proceeding eight chapters of this book.

Whether you are suffering from insomnia like I used to, or whether you simply want to improve your quality of sleep for better health, increased happiness and a longer life, Primal Sleep will help you sleep faster, deeper and longer.

The pathway to better sleep starts here.

The Six Steps

The Six Steps comprise six core areas identified through my research as being essential to optimizing the sleep-wake cycle as Mother Nature intended.

I have structured the book with the Six Steps at the beginning so that you can begin improving your sleep with immediate effect. Once you have begun following these steps, it is important that you read through the additional chapters, as they contain valuable supporting information for improving your sleep.

First things first. In order to improve the health of your sleep-wake cycle, for the next 30 days you must go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning. The recommended “go to bed” window is 10 p.m.–12 a.m. (no later). The recommended ‘waking time’ is 7–8 hours after you get into bed. If you have an unavoidable late night, simply continue as normal with the program. It’s best if you can follow all Six Steps consistently for 30 days, but sleeping and waking at the same time is the most important.

Note: if you work night shifts, implement the steps as advised, but ignore the recommended “go to bed” window. However, please note that working nights negatively impacts the sleep-wake cycle, and I encourage you to pay particular attention to Chapter 2, “Aligning Your Sleep with Mother Nature.”

Here are the six steps that we’ll now go through individually:

STEP 1: Let Your Body Know it’s Time for Bed

STEP 2: Isolate the Bedroom for Sleep

STEP 3: Do Not Lie Awake for More than 30 Minutes

STEP 4: Wake up at the Same Time Each Day

STEP 5: Do Not Look at the Time

STEP 6: Do Not Obsess Over Sleep

STEP 1: Let Your Body Know it's Time for Bed

It's crucial to develop a bedtime ritual that involves at least four things your brain can associate with preparing for sleep. These may include:

- Washing the dishes.
- Turning off lights and shutting doors.
- Putting the dog out in the garden for five minutes.
- A brief tidying up of things you have been using during the day.
- Washing your face or taking a warm shower.
- Brushing your teeth.
- Changing into your pajamas.

Maintaining a bedtime routine provides a series of important signals to the brain that you are preparing for sleep. When practiced consistently, this routine encourages the brain to move into "sleep mode," releasing melatonin and reducing brainwave activity for relaxation.

Often, people attempt to head straight off to bed after brain-stimulating exercises such as working on the computer or strenuous exercise. For many, making the transition to sleep isn't as simple as getting into bed and putting head to pillow. You might be sitting there yawning at your laptop thinking you're going to nod off as soon as your head hits the pillow, only to get into bed and struggle to fall asleep because your brainwave activity remains high due to prior stimulation.

The body needs an adequate period of time to wind down and prepare for sleep, so make sure you stop brain-stimulating activity at least two hours before you attempt to sleep. Start your preparation routine at least 30 minutes before going to bed. Complete at least four of the activities listed above in routine order each night. Take your time. Don't rush through the routine. Be methodical and enjoy the winding down of the last minutes of your day.

Washing the Day Away

Think back to your childhood for a moment. The call for “bath time” meant that it was time to prepare for sleep, and a bath was followed by getting into your pajamas; the final action of the day.

This mentally deep-rooted routine can be used to trigger the bed-sleep association in adulthood. Wash away the day by taking a hot shower or bath, or at the very least by washing your face. Think of this activity as if you are washing away the day’s stresses and events from your mind, and of course the day’s dirt from your skin.

This cleansing of the day is fundamental in drawing a mental line between day and night. Consider times you have fallen asleep in your clothes, only to have suddenly woken an hour or two later and fumbled sleepily to change into suitable pajamas. It’s almost as if your brain wakes you up and says, “Hey, we’re not ready to sleep through the night yet because we didn’t prepare properly for bed”. It’s as if part of the brain remains aware if it doesn’t receive the proper sleep association signals.

The cleansing of the day and putting on of fresh pajamas make the body feel relaxed and comfortable and indicate that it’s time to sleep. This is a mental association that the majority of us have grown up with, and one that can be used to create a mindset conducive to sleep.

Binaural Beats Audio

Your brain has specific electrical currents that dictate what type of state it’s in. In order to prepare for sleep, these brainwaves must slow down. The Primal Sleep Audio tracks work by sending a slightly different level of sound frequency to each ear through headphones. The difference between the two frequencies sent matches the frequency to which we want to entrain the brain. The Primal Sleep Audio tracks entrain the brain into low Theta (the zone in which the brain prepares for sleep) frequencies and mid-Delta (the zone in which the brain is in deep sleep) frequencies. These frequencies will relax your mind and let you slip into a deep sleep quickly.

Incorporate the Primal Sleep Audio tracks into your bedtime routine. Try listening to them with your phone in Airplane Mode as you lay on your bed. One amazing feature of this entrainment is that once you start using them consistently, your brain will be trained to release Delta waves on its own around the time you want to go to sleep.

Humans respond best to routine. Whether it is sleep, diet or learning, we naturally gravitate towards routine when seeking high productivity and stability and security in our lives.

This isn't a modern-day trait, either. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors would have employed bedtime routines, too. They wouldn't have had baths and pajamas, and the lights certainly didn't need turning off, but they would have done things like putting out the fire, making sure the children were comfortable and safe from the elements, sealing off the cave entrance, setting warning traps to alert the village of intruders, storing food away to protect it from insects and splashing water on their faces to clean off dirt and sweat.

Sure, we can't know everything humans did 10,000 years ago, but the nature of humans has always been one of routine, both during the day and before bed. There has always been preparation in the morning for the day ahead, and preparation in the evening before going to sleep.

Going to bed is the closing down of your day. Use your bedtime routine to provide recognizable signals to the brain that you are winding down and getting into sleep mode. Once these tasks are complete, you can feel content in the knowledge that the day has come to an end and all is in order to start a fresh, positive day the next morning.

ACTION STEPS

- Choose four activities to complete everyday as a bedtime routine. Include a Primal Sleep Audio track as one of the four.
- Perform these activities consistently at least 30 minutes before going to bed.

STEP 2: Isolate the Bedroom for Sleep

In this next step, you must set about creating an environment solely conducive to sleep. The bedroom must be a place the body associates with sleep, not with brain stimulating activities such as watching television or working on a computer.

Limit what you do in your bed before sleep to reading or light conversation with your partner. Do not browse Facebook or Twitter on your tablet, or get into lengthy conversations on the phone with friends while in bed.

Stimulating your brain unnecessarily before going to sleep will prevent you falling asleep quickly, and is likely to disturb the early stages of the sleep cycle. Instead, try some light reading under dim light. Fictional books make for perfect pre-sleep reading because such stories take the mind away from real life problems, helping you to let go of stress and worry. Although reading in bed for 15-20 minutes before sleep is permitted, refrain from reading in bed in the morning or in the afternoon – do this in another room of your home.

Another key aspect to triggering a bedroom-sleep association in the brain is to not sit in your bedroom when you return home from work, or during the day on your days off. Working, watching television or playing games on a computer should be confined to your living room or study. Create a permanent rule that the bedroom is not a place for playing, eating or staying for long periods of time. Time in the bedroom should be limited to sleep and sexual intimacy.

Just make sure you avoid spending unnecessary time in the bedroom. Apart from getting changed in the morning and popping in to grab something you need during the day, there really shouldn't be any need to go in there.

Sleeping in a Studio Apartment

If you live in a studio apartment, you won't have a separate room within which to watch television or work on your computer, and therefore your approach to this step will need to be different.

Confine working on the computer or engaging in other leisure activities to one specific side of the room. To prevent yourself from sitting on your bed while eating or watching television, consider buying a room divider to create a separate sleeping area. You can also buy a small chair and table for eating, and a small sofa or armchair for watching television. This will stop you from sitting on your bed to eat and watch television.

A sofa sleeper is a particularly bad purchase for those who have trouble sleeping. The reason for this is that if you sit on your bed during the day – even though the bed has taken on a different form – there is no mental line drawn between your place of sleep and place of activity.

And so, even though a studio apartment is essentially one open-plan room, organizing the limited space in this way will help the brain distinguish between two environments: one for sleep and one for play. Again, the only activities associated with your bed should be sleep and sexual intimacy.

Keeping a Tidy Bedroom

Ever heard the phrase “untidy life, untidy mind”? Well, there’s a lot of truth in these words. An untidy room contributes to an untidy mind, which in turn can make us feel disorganized and restless. Having an orderly bedroom sends a calming message to the brain, signaling that the immediate environment is in order and the body can prepare to relax and sleep.

When your thoughts are scattered, it is harder to sleep. This is because the mind is unable to center while being pulled in multiple directions by thoughts of different situations and circumstances. An untidy environment mirrors this mindset, contributing to the mind’s disorganized state. Ask any neat person and they’ll tell you their stress levels are heightened when in a cluttered environment, and that they find it difficult to function to their optimum potential when surrounded by piles. They will also tell you that they feel a huge sense of relief and relaxation once they’ve tidied up.

Make sure your bedroom feels spacious and orderly and is kept free of clutter. Keep belongings stored in the bedroom to a minimum, keeping only essential must-have items in the room.

Lighting and Curtains

Having the correct bedroom lighting is important because light triggers wakefulness. Fit soft bulbs to bedside lighting so that you don't need to switch your main ceiling light on when you prepare for bed. This will create a tranquil environment conducive to falling asleep fast.

Another good sleep-friendly investment is heavy curtains that completely eliminate early morning light. Light coming in through the curtains at 5 a.m. will signal to the brain that it is time to wake up, and even if you wake up and manage to fall back to sleep, your sleep cycle will be disrupted, leaving you feeling groggy when you finally get out of bed. Adjusting your sleeping pattern to wake with the sunlight each morning will eliminate this problem, and avoid the need to buy heavy curtains.

Nature dictates that we should be awake when it's light and asleep when it is dark. So while you might be sleeping during the first two or three hours of daylight, once you do get up, it is very important that you quickly open your curtains and expose yourself to sunlight. This exposure to sunlight forms an integral part of remapping the sleep-wake cycle. This behavior will condition the brain to associate sleep with darkness, helping you fall asleep fast and sleep deeply through the night.

Insomnia sufferers have a tendency to sleep in late, keeping the curtains closed in an attempt to compensate for lost sleep during the night. This is counterproductive, further confusing the brain and disrupting the body's internal sleeping clock.

Room Temperature

Maintaining the correct room temperature is a crucial factor in getting a good night's sleep. The ideal room temperature for restful, undisturbed sleep is approximately 68 degrees Fahrenheit. If a room is too hot or too cold, even if you do fall asleep quickly, your sleep cycles are likely to be disturbed by a fluctuating body temperature.

If you find yourself kicking off your blanket in the middle of the night, then you need

to consider using lighter bed linens – try 100% cotton sheets for a cooler sleeping experience. If you wake up feeling cold during the night, or feel that you are inhaling cold air as you try to sleep, adjust your heating accordingly.

Before you adjust your heating, however, consider the position of your bed. If you sleep near a window, you may be breathing cooler air than if your bed were positioned elsewhere in the room. Cold air will cause you to wake during the night and prevent you from falling asleep quickly.

On the other hand, if your bed is next to a radiator – set to come on at a particular time – you will experience a rise in room temperature during the night that is likely to cause you to wake up. Whether a rise or fall in temperature, the brain will wake the body when it detects substantial temperature change. The brain associates notable body temperature change with danger, such as illness or a potentially harmful environment, and will therefore wake you up as a precaution.

Whether temperature is disrupting your sleep or not, it is advisable to air your bedroom out once a day (during the day). Opening the window to change the air will rid the room of bad odors and dust particles, both of which can affect breathing, causing you to cough, sneeze or snore during the night.

Pajamas will also affect your body temperature, and should therefore be kept to a minimum (read: undergarments only). Heavy pajamas can restrict movement, rubbing against the body and causing sweating and discomfort.

Wi-Fi and Electronic Devices

The level of radiation emitted by Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity) has come under scrutiny in recent years. People are increasingly complaining of abnormal feelings of nausea and lethargy, which some researchers believe to be the result of overexposure to Wi-Fi waves.

Scientific studies have shown that those exposed to Wi-Fi waves prior to sleeping may experience disrupted sleep cycles. Similarly, reports in recent years have documented

the links between poor-quality sleep and excessive mobile phone use.

I have personally experienced sleeplessness after having long conversations on my smartphone before going to bed. As such, I advise against engaging in long conversations on your cell phone in the late evening, and certainly not in bed prior to sleep.

Although mobile corporations readily dispute such studies, the fact is that electronic devices have the ability to stimulate the brain, which may subsequently affect sleep. In light of this, make sure you switch off Wi-Fi devices before you sleep (preferably two hours before bed) and do not speak on your cell phone for long periods before going to bed. In addition to this, ensure all electronic devices in your bedroom are powered down before you sleep.

ACTION STEPS

- Don't use an electronic device in bed before going to sleep; limit activity to reading or light conversation.
- Draw a mental line between your place of sleep and place of activity. Don't use your bedroom as a place to eat, play, etc. Use a different space (like the living room) for these stimulating activities and use your bedroom primarily for sleeping and sexual intimacy.
- Keep your bedroom tidy and free of clutter in order to induce a calm state of mind before going to bed.
- Install heavy curtains to block out all light while you're sleeping; pull the curtains open immediately after waking to let your body know it's time to get up.
- Keep your room at a steady room temperature to eliminate waking from external discomfort.
- Switch off mobile devices two hours before going to bed to eliminate the electromagnetic and Wi-Fi waves that may stimulate your brain while you sleep.

STEP 3: Do Not Lie Awake for More than 30 Minutes

There is nothing worse than lying in bed not being able to sleep, becoming increasingly stressed and frustrated. Thoughts surrounding not being able to sleep take a foothold in your mind, and your chances of falling asleep decrease the longer you lie awake. When this happens for two or more nights in a row, the brain begins to associate getting into bed with being unable to sleep. This in turn results in sleep anxiety, which begins before you get into bed and increases the longer you lie awake. This anxiety and restlessness increases brain activity, subsequently preventing you from falling asleep.

To decrease sleep anxiety, do not lie in bed awake for more than 30 minutes from the time you attempt to sleep. Of course, this duration will be an estimate, as you will not be focusing on time, or have visual access to a clock.

Thirty minutes is plenty of time to fall into the early stages of sleep, and as such this is the suggested (approximate) time guideline for falling asleep. That said, what I don't want you to do is to break a state of falling asleep because you think you have reached the 30-minute mark. This rule is reserved for those nights when you have turned out the lights and attempted to sleep for approximately 30 minutes, but find yourself tossing and turning because of an overactive mind. If you feel sleepy and calm, but are taking a little while to doze off, don't feel you need to get up; simply remain as you are and embrace that feeling. If you are uncomfortable, stressed and feel too awake to sleep, you must get up and leave the bedroom. The following two exercises are designed to help you break sleep anxiety and fall asleep faster.

Exercise 1:

If you can't sleep and think you have been in bed for more than 30 minutes, go into another room such as the living room or kitchen. Switch on a lamp and engage in light activity that doesn't require much brainpower. Reading a gossip magazine is ideal, as it won't require you to concentrate too hard. After 15 minutes or so, or when you feel fully relaxed and ready to sleep again, go back to your bedroom.

This exercise helps teach the brain that the bedroom is a place of sleep, not a place for laying awake feeling stressed and experiencing high brainwave activity. If you still can't sleep after trying Exercise 1 twice, try Exercise 2.

Exercise 2:

Sit on the edge of your bed and let your arms flop down by your sides. Let your shoulders stoop forward and hang your head slightly so that your chin is pointing towards your chest. Breathe in deeply through your nose and hold your breath for five seconds, and then breathe out slowly through your mouth.

Really focus on your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Close your eyes and visualize the breath working its way to every corner of your body, and then watch it leave up through your lungs and out through your mouth. Repeat this process for a few minutes, until you feel light-bodied and sleepy.

This exercise will evoke a mindset similar to that of meditation, helping empty your mind of negative thought processes, detaching you from the day and bringing you to a place of deep relaxation. The breathing will slow your brainwave activity, taking you out of the Beta (high activity brainwaves) state and into the Theta (low activity brainwaves) state. At this point, if you're still struggling, it would be a good idea to listen to one of the Primal Sleep Audio tracks again while you do this.

Once you feel balanced and peaceful and aren't showing signs of sleep anxiety such as excessive thought spirals, hot flushes, sweats and feelings of frustration or stress, return to your bed and assume your usual sleep position.

By day three of the 30-day program, you will be so tired when you get into bed that you'll drop off immediately without the need to perform these exercises to combat wakefulness. However, should you fall into a bad sleep pattern again at any point in the future, knowing how to relieve sleep anxiety using these exercises will prove very useful for those nights when your mind just won't let you sleep.

ACTION STEPS

- Implement the Sleep Anxiety Exercises whenever you start feeling sleep anxiety while laying in bed to calm the mind.

STEP 4: Wake up at the Same Time Each Day

An integral part of optimizing your sleep is waking up and getting out of bed at the same time each day. During the 30-day program, you **MUST** – regardless of what time you fall asleep – wake up at the same time each day and get out of bed immediately.

For the first few days of the program, you may feel quite tired. This is to be expected because you are resetting your sleep-wake cycle to optimum synchronization, which takes the body a little getting used to. You may experience excessive yawning in the afternoon, flickering eyelids here and there and perhaps some muscle fatigue, but once you get through those first few days you will begin sleeping like a baby and have the energy of a caveman.

Regardless of whether you have a day off work, you must wake up at the same time each day. Doing so will help reset your sleep-wake cycle, reprogramming your body to sleep and wake at the same times each day. When your brain begins to realize that this is its daily waking time, it will regularly want to sleep at least 6-8 hours prior to when it needs to wake up.

Once the brain begins to reprogram, you will notice a drastic increase in tiredness before your desired sleep time, and a huge improvement in how fast you fall asleep and how revitalized you feel in the morning. To begin with, you will need to make use of an alarm clock, but pay close attention to Step 5 before doing so.

Going to bed and getting up at varying times is the primary reason for the development of an unhealthy sleep pattern. Consistently abusing the sleep-wake cycle in this way over a prolonged period can result in the onset of insomnia. In my experience, 95% of people who sleep badly do so because the brain is confused as to when it is supposed to be asleep.

Lying in bed in the morning falling in and out of sleep, trying to catch up on sleep missed during the night, contributes to this confusion. Once you have been woken by your alarm clock, you must get out of bed and begin your day. Even if you have slept badly, you must get up out of bed immediately. This physical behavior will create a habit that triggers the brain to wake at the same time each day.

As mentioned at the start of the program, going to bed at the same time each night is of equal importance for the same reasons, albeit in reverse. Even after the 30-day program has finished, when possible, you should stick to the same sleep-wake times to continue promoting healthy sleep.

ACTION STEPS

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day to reset your sleep-wake cycle, regardless of how well you sleep throughout the night or if you have the day off.

STEP 5: Do Not Look at the Time

Our hunter-gatherer ancestors did not own alarm clocks. They didn't need them, as we'll discuss later in the book. In the modern day, we are constantly hounded by not having enough time, and this is not conducive to getting a healthy amount of sleep. When we have trouble falling asleep, the first thing we do is begin focusing on the time. We begin stressing over how many hours we have left to sleep before we need to wake up and go to work.

The reality is that regularly looking at the time only decreases your ability to fall asleep. The visual reminder that precious sleeping hours are slipping away will cause you further frustration and keep you awake. To sleep well, we must be in a state of deep relaxation. So if you can't fall asleep, or you wake up during the night, no matter how late you think it is, do not look at the time. Even if you get up out of bed to try the exercises in Step 3, do not look at the time.

When you go to bed, set a bedside alarm clock and then turn it around so it cannot be seen during the night. If you have any wall clocks in your bedroom, or other illuminating devices that display the time, take them out of the room or face them towards the wall.

No matter what time you fall asleep, even if it is light outside, do not look at the time. When we clock-watch, we make mental calculations, figuring out how many hours sleep we could get if we were to fall asleep now or in so many minutes' time. This heightens anxiety around not being able to fall asleep, increasing brain activity and reducing our ability to relax.

It is, however, very important to use an alarm clock during the 30 days of the Six Steps program. An alarm clock will ensure you wake at the same time each day, and of course, ensure you are on time for work! However, this is not solely a weekday practice. You must set your alarm clock on weekends, too. This means no sleeping in, no matter how tired you feel. As stipulated in Step 4, as soon as the alarm clock goes off, you must get up immediately; open the curtains right away and stretch to fully wake yourself up.

Before you know it, your brain will be waking you up on time without the need for an alarm clock. When this starts to happen, it is a positive indication that you have reset your sleep-wake cycle and developed a healthy sleeping pattern akin to that of our hunter-gatherer ancestors.

ACTION STEPS:

After you've gone to bed, turn your alarm clock around and don't look at the time under any circumstance. This only adds to sleep anxiety.

STEP 6: Do Not Obsess Over Sleep

If you're someone that suffers from bouts of bad sleep, telling yourself and others that you aren't sleeping well can easily become a permanent reality. Such statements spiral into increasingly negative thought processes, such as "I must sleep well tonight or I will get sick", or, "My work will suffer and my boss will fire me".

Don't allow yourself to become caught up in the PR of bad sleep. It is quite natural to want to tell people when you are feeling tired and down, and you might feel like you need to mention you aren't sleeping well in case people think you look tired, but in reality, most people won't see the difference. Where possible, avoid negative conversations like, "Hi, how are you"? "Oh, I am so tired. I didn't sleep well last night."

Instead, when you experience a bad night's sleep, get up and proceed with your day as usual, ignoring the tiredness as best you can. If you find yourself caught in negative thinking, try switching your focus to positive affirmations such as "I will sleep well tonight," or, "It's only one bad night's sleep, I will be fine."

Those who worry about losing sleep are more likely to develop sleep anxiety, and subsequently fall victim to insomnia. Making an issue out of lost sleep makes its reality that much stronger. In loose terms, the more negative your mindset, the more likely your sleep is to worsen.

If you find yourself caught in a cycle of worry over your sleep, remember that once sleep is lost, it is gone forever. This simple fact renders the worry a pointless endeavor, leaving you with one choice. And that choice is to be positive in the present moment, to let bad sleep go and create a mindset conducive to better sleep going forward.

Stick to the Six Steps program regardless of how well you slept the previous night. The more positive you are, and the healthier your sleep-wake cycle becomes, the better you will sleep.

ACTION STEPS:

- Notice when a negative thought about sleep arises and stop it in its tracks. If you don't sleep well one night, go on with your day as best you can and tell yourself you'll sleep well that night. Negative talk about your quality of sleep only adds to sleep anxiety and worsens the problem.

Essential Reading for Better Sleep

Over the next 30 days, and even beyond optimizing the health your sleep-wake cycle, it is likely that you will have a number of questions regarding how specific aspects of environment and lifestyle affect sleep, and how these things should be appropriated within the scope of sleeping in alignment with Mother Nature.

In the following eight chapters, I provide further explanation for the methodology behind the Six Steps, sharing knowledge from my personal research studies and addressing common problem areas that may hinder your readjustment to a healthy sleep pattern.

This information will help you better understand the pre-programmed human sleeping pattern, providing you with important knowledge of how various aspects of environment and lifestyle affect sleep. This information will further empower you to take control, enabling you to tweak your life routine to be aligned with optimal sleep hygiene practice.

Aligning Your Sleep with Mother Nature

Poor-quality sleep is more often than not the result of disruption to the sleep-wake cycle. Some people are more sensitive to this than others, and such people are generally those who experience extended periods of bad sleep after one or two late nights, a vacation abroad or other notable change in environment or lifestyle.

Of course, changes to routine are inevitable and unavoidable at times, and under normal circumstances the body will readjust its sleep-wake cycle fairly quickly. For some, however, the adjustment may take longer, causing worry and frustration, which is a dangerous tipping point for the onset of insomnia, as anxiety builds up around not being able to sleep.

Regardless of how disrupted your sleep-wake cycle is, your body wants to sleep during the night and to be awake during the day. This is the natural order of sleep. Therefore, by implementing good sleep hygiene practice, you can steer your body back into a routine within which it will thrive. Understanding that the body responds best to routine is imperative to our health in general. For example, medical science has shown that there are better times to eat, exercise and learn than others, and sleep is no different. When a person has regular sleep, eating and exercise routines, they are usually in very good health. Conversely, when a person works against the natural order of things – sleeping and eating at different times of the day and night – the body struggles to maintain health.

Working Against Your Natural Cycle

Sleep is something we have come to expect the body to do on demand. We treat sleep as if it's something we can fit in around the rest of our lives, something we'll get around to doing when everything else is finished.

We expect the brain to be able to switch off like a computer and sleep when we want to rest. But what we forget to appreciate is that the process of sleep begins long before we get into bed. As the evening draws to a close, brainwaves slow down and chemical reactions occur in the body that assist in putting us to sleep. The problem is that these processes do not occur when required if the body doesn't know when it should be sleeping.

In the modern era, we are constantly working against the natural sleep cycle. We continually change the time we go to bed, we stimulate the brain before we get into bed, we fly too quickly across time zones, we overindulge in consumption of stimulants and often attempt to go from a strenuous task to a state of sleep in a matter of minutes.

We put the body under immense pressure to sleep when we want it to, and when it doesn't respond we become frustrated, turning to sleep aids because we believe we have developed a "sleep problem."

The reality is that the large majority of people who have trouble sleeping do not have a sleep problem linked to illness or specific dysfunction of the brain. The problem is usually a result of a lifestyle that is essentially anti-sleep. Consider this: we may go to a party until 3 a.m. one night, get into bed at 10 p.m. the next night and then stay up until 1 a.m. watching television the following night. This inconsistency negatively impacts the sleep-wake cycle, because not only does it mean inconsistent sleep times, but usually inconsistent waking times, too. The impact is then further compounded by regular intake of stimulants such as nicotine, coffee and alcohol. The reality is that we cannot expect the body to respond to our sleep demands if we continually abuse the sleep-wake cycle.

Before the Light Bulb

Even though the light bulb was invented way back in 1879, it wasn't until the 1920s that the majority of people adopted electric lighting in the home. Considering that fossil evidence suggests modern humans evolved in East Africa around 200,000 years ago, we haven't been using artificial light for very long at all.

As such, our hunter-gatherer ancestors would have used the sun to set their routine:

As the sun went down, people would have begun eating food and singing songs by the campfire, and most likely slept within three or four hours of it getting dark. Depending on the season and location, this would have been between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

In primitive societies, the sun's activity not only acted as a trigger for sleep, but for waking, too. There were no alarm clocks to help a person wake in the morning, so the brain acted as a clock by naturally waking the body when the sun rose.

There were, of course, members of particular tribes that slept differently under specific circumstances. For example, there is evidence that before the use of dogs, tribes used night watchmen to secure the village, much like the modern-day security guard. In the present day, anthropologists have observed tribes in which up to 25% of villagers remain active throughout the night, like the Temiars of Indonesia and the Ibans of Sarawak. However, our own growth from childhood to adulthood provides supporting evidence that the sleeping behavior of Western societies, for the most part, has historically operated in synchronization with the light of day and darkness of night.

As a young child, your nightly sleep would have begun between 6-8 p.m., and lasted until 5 or 6 a.m., basically sleeping shortly after nightfall and waking with the sun. Now, think about a time in your life where you have experienced a period of really good sleep, i.e., falling asleep quickly and sleeping right through the night for seven or eight hours.

During such a period, how often did you wake up before your alarm clock? How often did you wake up literally a couple of minutes before the alarm sounded? I am willing to bet the answer is probably quite often.

Now consider a time when you have had to sleep without curtains – or very thin curtains – in your bedroom. Did the morning light streaming in through the window wake you up? I am willing to bet that it did. Now consider the mid-afternoon dip the majority of people experience daily at work at around 2-3 p.m., that uncontrollable yawning and sudden desire to flop on your desk and close your eyes. Why does this happen, even to those who have slept well the night before? Could it be that we aren't programmed to work into the late afternoon and early evening, and that historically this is the time of day the brain would have been winding down from high-energy activity and preparing for food, relaxation and sleep?

The answer is most likely, yes. In fact, in many parts of the world, particularly in rural farming communities, the working day starts at around 5 or 6 a.m. and finishes before 4 p.m. This is partly because sunlight is required to work, but is at the same time representative of the human sleep-wake pattern prior to the agricultural revolution.

Sleeping During the Correct Hours

Light provides us with natural sleep-wake triggers. The more in sync we are with the rise and setting of the sun, the better we sleep. However, since the introduction of artificial light in the home, the time we go to sleep has gotten later and become increasingly inconsistent, which has interfered with the natural cycle of sleep. The problem remains, however, that the hectic modern-day lifestyle means sleep is prone to disruption. We certainly can't tell the kids to take care of themselves and go to bed at 8 p.m., or tell the office manager we want to start at 6 a.m. and finish at 3 p.m. However, it is possible to go to bed at almost exactly the same time on the majority of nights in a given week. And doing so will noticeably improve sleep quality.

Good sleep is not entirely determined by quantity, but rather by how consistently a person sleeps during the correct hours. For example, you will often hear a person complain that they still feel tired after having slept well the night before. This is usually because they have an inconsistent sleep routine, and although they think they are sleeping well, the body isn't completing healthy sleep cycles during the sleeping period. For example, sleeping for 7 hours from 3 a.m. to 10 a.m. will leave a person feeling more tired than if they slept for 7 hours between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. This is because at least half of this period of sleep is conducted during unnatural sleeping hours, hours that are prone to poor sleep cycles plagued by intermittent waking and light disturbance.

Many sleep studies have highlighted the importance of going to bed before 12 a.m., and I agree entirely. Think about it logically; can it be healthy to go to bed when the next day has already started? Unfortunately this presents a problem for those working night shifts.

Working Nights

Some health experts might argue that the time you go to sleep is irrelevant, as long as you maintain a consistent sleep routine and get an adequate amount of sleep. I wholeheartedly disagree with this viewpoint. In my experience, those working nights struggle to sleep properly and suffer from persistent tiredness. The lack of natural light exposure alone will remain a constant hindrance in achieving a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

If you work nights, following the Six Steps will help you sleep better during the unnatural sleeping hours, but bear in mind that you are working against your body's natural cycle, and therefore will struggle to achieve optimum, healthy sleep. If possible, change your shift pattern so that you start work early in the morning rather than working through the night. Doing so will enable you to sleep early in the evening and wake early in the morning, ensuring that you experience adequate natural light exposure during the day.

If you don't work nights but seldom get to bed before midnight or 1 a.m., try this:

- For one week, go to bed and get up an hour earlier than usual
- After one week, shift your sleep and waking times back another hour

After two weeks, you will notice a marked difference in how refreshed you feel during the day. You will also see an improvement in your general mood and level of productivity.

Stages of Sleep and Those Elusive Eight Hours

Duration of sleep varies from person to person, and the *eight hours of sleep* rule cannot be applied to everyone. Some people require seven hours of sleep each night, and a small percentage of people, due to a tiny mutation in a gene called DE2C, require just six. However, eight hours is the goal we are medically advised to aim for, and the target we have become overly concerned with achieving. Of course, it's important to recognize when you aren't getting enough sleep, and to not convince yourself that you can successfully live a sleep-deprived existence, but it's equally as important to make sure you don't lose sleep worrying about not getting enough sleep.

Another key consideration for the “eight hour” rule is that not all time spent in bed is spent asleep. People often say to themselves, “If I get into bed now, I can get my eight hours sleep”. However, it takes time to fall asleep once you get into bed, and your sleep might be broken during the night if you have to go to the bathroom or if you are woken by noise. Therefore, actual time spent asleep is usually far less than we think, and the reality is that very few people enjoy eight hours of unbroken sleep each night.

Understanding the Sleep Cycle

To know how much sleep we are really getting, we need to understand the process of sleep. Sleep works in cycles that last approximately 90 minutes each. There are four key stages within this cycle that can be broken down into two sections: non-REM sleep and REM sleep.

Stage 1 (Non-REM 1) is the transition to sleep, which takes approximately 5-15 minutes.

Stage 2 (Non-Rem 2) is the first stage of real sleep; when eye movement stops and heart rate slows down, which lasts 10-20 minutes.

Stage 3 (Non-REM 3) is the deep sleep we need to feel re-energized, and happens approximately 15-30 minutes into the cycle, depending on the length of the first two stages.

Stage 4 (REM 1) is the last stage in the cycle --the dream state. REM sleep happens approximately 70-90 minutes into the cycle and lasts for about 15 minutes before the sleep cycle starts again, typically falling back to Stage 3, dropping to Stage 2 and then restarting. The body cycles through deep sleep and REM sleep between four and six times during the night, with four complete cycles of sleep providing you with six hours sleep, and six cycles providing you with nine hours sleep.

Getting the *right amount of sleep* is complicated, and it’s almost impossible for you to know how much sleep you are getting. Some people spend less time in bed than others but fall asleep much faster, meaning they access the sleep cycle quicker. Some people have fewer sleep cycles than others but experience longer periods of deep sleep and

REM sleep. Others have more cycles but experience shorter stages of deep sleep and REM sleep. As a general reference point, if you feel fatigued and unable to concentrate properly during the day, the likelihood is that you aren't getting enough sleep.

Scientists know why we need the sleep we get, but are still unsure as to why we need so much sleep compared to other mammals. What science has proven is that sleep is essential for maintaining normal levels of cognitive skills, with speech, memory and rational thinking all negatively affected by sleep deprivation. Those with insomnia struggle to get past the early stages of sleep without waking up and having to start the cycle again. This reduces the amount of time spent in the restorative sleep stages. Once sleep debt is accumulated, sleep deprivation occurs, causing fatigue, irritability and the inability to focus and concentrate during the day.

In a world obsessed with getting eight hours of sleep, it is easy to become fixated on quantity of sleep rather than focusing on improving quality. Focus on the good sleep hygiene methods set out in the Six Steps. Don't count hours or lie awake contemplating sleep cycles. If you sleep for seven hours and feel energized, don't go stressing yourself out over not having slept for eight.

You'll feel far more refreshed if you sleep for a solid five or six hours than if you sleep for eight hours and wake multiple times during the night. Furthermore, once your sleep-wake cycle has been restored to a healthy state, your body will naturally begin to sleep longer.

Exercise and Energy

Another core aspect of working with your natural cycle is to ensure you eat and exercise properly. The fitter and healthier you are, the better you will cope with less sleep, and the more likely you are to experience healthy sleep cycles.

Those who experience the healthiest sleep are generally those who maintain a consistent sleeping routine, exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet with minimal intake of sugar, caffeine and artificial foods. People with such a lifestyle often appear to sleep less because they spend less time in bed. However, the reality is that their sleep

quality is far greater, meaning they sleep more efficiently than those who spend eight or nine hours in bed and still feel tired during the day.

The mind and body need to be adequately exercised to trigger healthy sleep during the night. Considering that our hunter-gatherer ancestors roamed up to 12 miles each day, it is easy to understand why a common cause of modern-day sleeplessness is a failure to properly tire out the mind and body during the day. Make sure you are drinking plenty of water and adequately fueling your mind and body with energy-promoting Paleo foods: fruit, vegetables, healthy fats, meat, fish, etc.. A healthy exercise and diet routine goes a long way in creating a healthy sleep routine.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Go to bed before 11.00 p.m.
2. Wake up before 7:00 a.m.
3. Concentrate on implementing good sleep hygiene rather than focusing on getting eight hours of sleep.
4. Reduce your caffeine intake by reducing the amount of coffee and caffeine-based soda drinks you consume.
5. Reduce your artificial sugar intake by reducing the amount of chocolate you eat, and by eliminating sweets, cakes, biscuits and other non-Paleo desserts.
6. Increase the amount of exercise you do. If you don't enjoy the gym, or can't afford the cost, take a brisk 30-minute walk/run in the early morning and late afternoon/early evening. You can also do stretching and bodyweight exercises at home.

Stress and Sleep

Most people don't realize when they are suffering from stress until it begins to noticeably impact their health. One area of our lives stress is capable of affecting with great ease is sleep. This is because we push stress to the back of our minds, then, the moment we try to wind down from a hectic day to lie down and sleep, the associated negative emotions move to the forefront of the mind and we begin to think, dwell and contemplate.

The majority of people have experienced those crazy, spiraling thought processes that occur as soon as we close our eyes to sleep. When these thoughts are positive and happy, it promotes deep relaxation, which means we usually fall asleep quite quickly. However, when these thoughts are related to negative emotions, the stress we haven't properly dealt with during the daytime surfaces, causing high-level brain activity and stopping us from falling asleep.

Identifying Stress

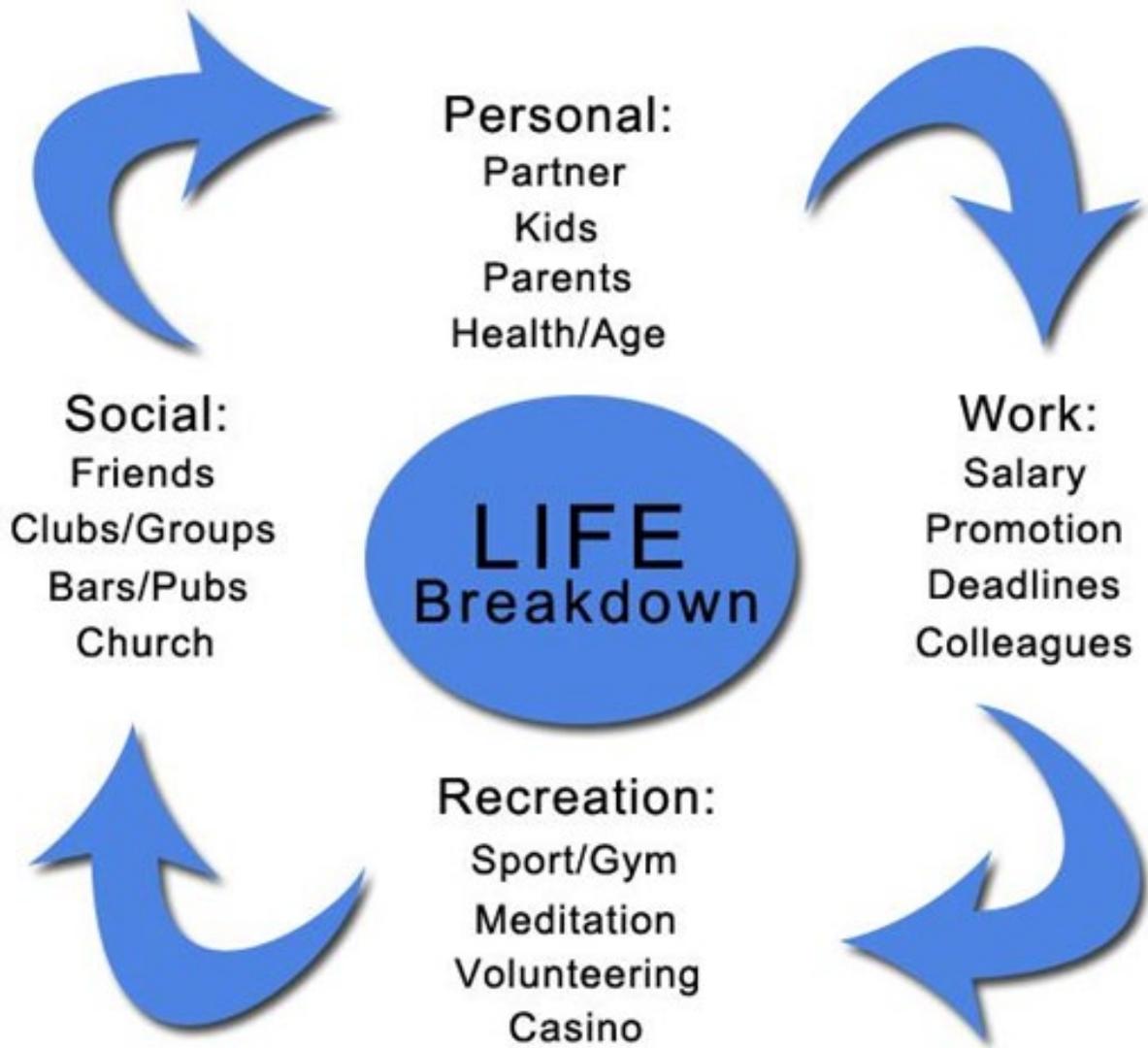
Achieving a positive mental balance that makes you feel contented and relaxed will help you drift quickly off to sleep at night. Nagging feelings of worry and frustration – pushed to the back of your mind during the day – will arise the minute your head touches the pillow, consuming your mind and making it difficult to sleep.

An effective method of identifying the stress that may be affecting your sleep is to break your life down into key areas, as I have done in the diagram below. Create a diagram, listing subheadings within key areas that best represent your life. It is important to list both negative and positive aspects for each key life area, because it is entirely possible that something you perceive as a positive, non-stressful thing is actually causing stress in another area of your life.

For example, you may be making great money in your job, but at the same time you could be neglecting your personal goals. Similarly, you may have a fantastic social life,

but leave yourself little time to nurture the needs of your marriage.

Life Breakdown Example:



Analyze your life area by area, with a the purpose in mind of implementing increased balance and harmony in each. Consider how you can eliminate negative aspects of your life affecting your happiness. Think about ways in which you can release stress by channeling your energy into positive endeavors.

For example, a great way to relieve yourself from the stress of the corporate world is to partake in charity work. Channeling your energy into helping those less fortunate than yourself will dissipate stress and bring natural reward through the giving of kindness and compassion. Such work offers new purpose, new focus and plugs us back into the wider human consciousness, ultimately helping us to relax, feel happier and more positive about our lives.

You may also consider trying meditation. This ancient art form is a proven method of relieving stress from both mind and body, and a known facilitator of healthy sleep. Meditation teaches you to free the mind from attachment and aversion, to be present, calm and mentally spacious.

Below is a list of six questions to be used in conjunction with each area of your life breakdown. These questions will help kick-start your progress in identifying stress-related issues in your life, so that you can work on cutting down stress that could be affecting your sleep.

You may discover that you have incomplete tasks or goals that you have put aside in the wake of other people's expectations, or that your life has become full of obligations and unfulfilling activities. Use the diagram and the list of questions below to draw a road map back to a lifestyle that strikes a healthy balance between your family, work and friends and your personal goals and expectations.

Life Breakdown Question Guide:

1. Do you feel happy when you think about this area of your life?
2. Do you feel undervalued in this area of your life?
3. Do you look forward to this area of your life each day?
4. Are you being honest with yourself and others in this area of your life?

5. Are you working toward or against your long-term goals in this area of your life?
6. Are your goals really your goals, or are they the expectations of others?

Stress and Sleep Anxiety

Stress and anxiety seldom appear separately, and stress is often the trigger for anxiety, especially for those with an underlying anxiety disorder. Anxiety can usually be linked to a stressful event that has left negative emotional scarring. The stress subsequently manifests itself in the mind, presenting physical symptoms of anxiety when triggered by a reoccurrence of the same or a similar event.

Sleep anxiety is triggered by the inability to sleep, with a person first experiencing the stress of not being able to sleep, and then becoming anxious and fearful of not being able to sleep when readying themselves for bed. The initial onset of not being able to sleep, however, is usually related to stress arising from a particular event, such as a death in the family, the breakdown of a marriage or financial hardship.

The physical symptoms of sleep anxiety mirror those of normal anxiety, and may include tension, a heightened sense of fear, hyperventilation, sweating, shaking, nausea, hyperactivity, high-level brain activity, extreme wakefulness, and tiredness accompanied by the inability to sleep.

If you think your sleep is being affected by stress arising from *changeable* life situations, take action; to start, try this exercise:

- Do a “brain dump” in a journal when you wake up; write down all your thoughts, feelings, anxieties, etc.
- Do this once more before you begin your bedtime routine.

Emptying your mind onto a page defragments the brain, helping you achieve mental clarity and empowering you to move forward. Things always seem far clearer and simpler when they appear in front of our eyes, rather than remaining jumbled up inside the mind – where they lay waiting to move to the forefront of our consciousness the moment we try to go to sleep.

Sleeping Before a Big Occasion

Even for those who don't have any difficulty sleeping, getting a good night's sleep before a big occasion isn't easy due to the mental disturbance of nervousness and anticipation. However, for those with a history of poor sleep, sleeping the night before a big occasion such as a job interview, public speaking or wedding is that much more difficult.

It goes without saying that it is impossible to stop thinking, and is therefore very difficult to put an upcoming big occasion out of your mind, let alone when it's happening the following morning. However, rather than focus on trying not to think about it, focus on the fact that one night of bad sleep will not affect your performance on the day. By accepting this fact prior to going to sleep, you will reduce anxiety and increase your chances of sleeping well.

Regardless of whether you sleep well or not, the adrenaline of the occasion will get you through the day and offset any lost sleep. Consider that athletes often sleep badly before big races, as do politicians during election campaigns and singers before concerts. But seldom does lack of sleep affect their ability to perform well.

If you accept that you will have a positive day regardless of how well you sleep, you are far more likely to end up getting the sleep you desire. On the other hand, if you sit around worrying that lack of sleep will end up spoiling your day, you are less likely to sleep well, and will also have the emotional drain of worry to cope with.

Stick to Your Routine

The circumstances are different, however, if you have experienced a run of bad sleep up until the night before the big day. If this is the case, you will be suffering the effects of sleep deprivation, which will already be affecting your ability to function at optimum performance. For this reason, you should ensure your sleep hygiene is in good order in advance of the day. When you have confirmed the date of the event, be disciplined in

implementing the Six Steps at least seven days beforehand. Doing so will help you get at least some sleep the night before, and ensure you don't accumulate a sleep debt prior to the occasion.

When preparing for sleep the night before, make sure you stick to your current routine. Often, people try and go to bed too early on the eve of a big occasion, thinking that it's a wise decision before an important day. I am not saying this isn't a good idea for the majority, but if you tend to lose sleep through nerves and worry, then this isn't the best strategy to use.

Going to bed well before the time your body has gotten used to falling asleep is likely to result in you lying awake stressing about not being able to fall asleep. You'll become so focused on getting to sleep early that you'll evoke worry around not being able to sleep, and end up being wide awake well past your normal sleep time.

If you need to go to bed an hour earlier because you need to wake up earlier, that's fine. But don't make any drastic changes to your routine of more than an hour or so – unless of course you are really tired and want to sleep particularly early. Stick to your Six Steps routine and carry on as normal, regardless of whether this occasion requires you to wake up a couple of hours earlier than usual. You might lose an hour or two of sleep, and take a little longer to feel fully alert in the morning, but the sleep you do get will be sufficient enough to get you through the day, which is far better than going to bed too early and keeping yourself awake through the frustration of not being able to fall asleep.

Fueling the Body to Compensate for Lost Sleep

If you sleep badly the night before your big day, don't try and counter this with excessive coffee drinking or by taking over the counter "wake up" pills. Such artificial stimulation will induce high points of wakefulness and very low points of tiredness, which will ultimately leave you feeling spaced out and unable to concentrate very well.

****COMMENT*** We should have one of our writers implement some better nutritional advice here on what to eat if you've slept poorly and are feeling tired. Maybe recommend an adaptogenic superfood like rhodiola

Allow your body to wake up naturally by immediately exposing yourself to sunlight, and by eating a “slow-release” energy breakfast. Eating a banana or two will provide you with a sustainable energy resource, and will also keep your brain alert due to the high potassium content. Ensure you balance carbohydrates with protein, such as some boiled eggs and bacon. If you’re in a rush, then grab some nuts on the go.

Last, but certainly not least, make sure you drink lots of water. Water combats tiredness by keeping the body hydrated. Have a tall glass as soon as you wake up and keep drinking it consistently throughout the day.

In summary:

1. Implement good sleep hygiene at least seven days in advance of the big occasion.
2. Maintain your current sleep routine the night before the event. Focus on performing well the next day rather than sleeping badly the night before.
3. Don’t stress over missing out on sleep; even the most confident of people lose a few hours sleep before a nerve-racking occasion.
4. Don’t drink excessive amounts of coffee and avoid taking “wake up” pills.
5. Eat a slow-release energy breakfast, including a substantial source of protein.
6. Drink water first thing in the morning and throughout the day.

Napping

Some people believe that an afternoon nap can assist in improving nighttime sleep quality. This may be the case for some people, but it isn't recommended for those sensitive to disruption of the sleep-wake cycle. If you are struggling to sleep at night and napping in the afternoon, you are allowing yourself to compensate for sleep lost during what should be your normal sleeping hours. A nap of thirty minutes in the afternoon may prevent you being able to sleep when you get into bed at night.

If you develop a habit of napping in the afternoon, you will begin to rely on the nap to compensate for sleep lost during the night. While an afternoon nap can be a pleasurable experience that provides an energy boost for the remainder of the day, if your nighttime sleep is of poor quality, napping will only serve to further disrupt your sleep-wake cycle. Furthermore, if you are sleeping badly at night, a nap in the afternoon may actually leave you feeling more tired. This is because your sleep debt is likely to cause you to fall into a deep sleep rather than a nap, which by definition is a short period of light sleep.

When you are woken in the middle of your sleep cycle, you will feel disoriented, tired and groggy. Worse still, if you aren't woken up after a short period of time, you may sleep for too long and find yourself unable to sleep again during the night. So while a nap may revitalize a person who consistently sleeps well at night, if your sleep-wake cycle is out of synchronization, a nap will most likely leave you feeling exhausted and disorientated for the remainder of the day.

A Bad Habit

Those who sleep well at night should not require an afternoon nap. A healthy adult is more than capable of getting through the day without requiring an extra period of sleep. Moreover, we want the brain to associate nighttime and bed with sleep so that we can achieve the deepest, most restful sleep possible.

Poor-quality sleep arises from disruption to the sleep-wake cycle, and napping will only serve to further disrupt that cycle. The last thing you want to do is decrease the quality of your sleep at night by napping during the day. If you are sleeping badly at night, your body will attempt to compensate for this loss the moment you close your eyes during the day. Don't allow this to happen. The appropriate time to make up for a bad night's sleep is the following night, in bed.

An Exception to the Rule

In some countries with hot climates, it is customary to take a lunchtime/afternoon nap. This practice is commonplace in farming communities where people wake up very early and work long hours in the sun. If you live in a hot climate and require a nap to replenish your energy levels, I suggest setting an alarm clock that wakes you after 20 minutes to ensure that you don't sleep for too long. If you live in a country that traditionally naps at lunchtime or in the afternoon, and you are experiencing trouble sleeping at night, you should simply abstain from taking a nap. When others settle down for a nap, keep yourself stimulated by listening to music, writing, painting or doing some other form of work that will not disturb those who are taking a nap.

Sharing a Bed

Sharing a bed poses a number of sleep hazards for sensitive sleepers, in particular being sensitive to sound and movement when sleeping next to a serial turner or snorer. A simple rustle of sheets or sudden gargle of breath is enough to wake you from the depths of deep sleep, and even though you may fall back to sleep soon after being woken, constant breaks in your sleep cycles will cause you to feel lethargic and unrested the following day.

The Separate Bed Solution

Consistent poor sleep affects work performance and mood, and subsequently puts emotional strain on a relationship. As such, it is becoming increasingly common for couples to sleep in separate beds to improve their quality of sleep. However, many couples refrain from this practical solution because they fear that nightly separation will cause emotional division.

As a society, we are conditioned to think that sharing a bed is a fundamental aspect of a loving relationship, and that sleeping separately detracts from intimacy. But society didn't always think this way. For example, in Roman times the bed was used for sexual congress but not for sharing sleep. There's absolutely nothing wrong with wanting space to yourself to get the sleep you need, so don't worry about what others will think if you and your partner decide that having separate beds is a positive solution for improving your sleep.

Physical Contact During Sleep

Some people are comfortable maintaining physical contact during sleep, and others aren't; it's as simple as that. I personally have never been able to fall into a deep sleep while hugging or engaging in any other form of physical contact. For sensitive sleepers

such as myself, this can cause lack of understanding in partners who feel deprived of affection. If you are a light sleeper, explain to your partner that touch and movement can easily disturb your sleep.

You can then discuss implementing some of the solutions below, which I have designed to help light sleepers combat the hazards of sharing a bed. These solutions will help you maintain the intimate aspects of sharing a bed with a partner, while at the same time enabling you to get a good night's sleep.

1. Rather than having separate beds in the same room, or in separate rooms, buy two large single beds and push them together. This will give you the perception of sharing a bed while at the same time making you feel like you have your own space. This solution will also lessen the impact of your partner's movement during the night. A king size bed is also a viable option, but the advantage of two single beds is that impact from movement on your partner's side will be minimized. If you choose to push two twin beds together, you can wrap a double bed sheet around both, creating the illusion of one big bed while maintaining the psychological isolation of two twin beds.
2. Buy a second blanket so that you don't end up playing tug of war during the night with one. The slightest tug from your partner will cause you to wake up during the night. Having your own blanket will add to the feeling of sleeping independently in your own space.
3. Make sure your mattress is firm and not springy, otherwise you will feel the impact of your partner moving during the night. A springy mattress may also cause you to wake up from your own movement.
4. Allocate "cuddle time" before you go to sleep to overcome the issue of not being able to hug and sleep. Ask your partner to compromise on "sleep hugging" by participating in "cuddle time" prior to going to sleep. Allocated time for affection may sound rather regimented and somewhat prudish, but instead look at it as something unique that you share. "Cuddle time" can also serve as a part of your sleep preparation routine, indicating to the brain that you are settling down to go to sleep.
5. If your bed is pushed up against a wall, do not sleep on the wall-facing side. The wall will limit your movement and wake you up should part of your body touch it

during the night. The wall also creates a sense of being closed in, and may cause you to feel claustrophobic. You don't need a huge space within which to sleep, but you should do your best to eliminate feeling restricted by your immediate environment.

6. It is important that you and your partner try and go to bed at the same time. This will prevent your partner disturbing you by coming into the bedroom after you have fallen asleep. Going to bed at the same time is particularly important during the 30 days of improving your sleep health using the Six Steps, but is also something you should practice on a regular basis to promote better sleep. This will also add another shared aspect to the "going to bed" experience, and will counteract against some of the intimacy lost through the lack of "sleep hugging."

Smoking and Sleep

Although smokers generally consider smoking a relaxant, research shows that nicotine dependency causes increased stress. This is because smokers experience normal moods during smoking and worsening moods between cigarettes. The relaxant effect only reflects the reversal of the tension and irritability that develop during nicotine depletion. In other words, dependent smokers need nicotine to feel normal. This presents a problem because the longer you sleep, the more depleted the body becomes of nicotine. This depletion causes cravings, ultimately waking you up and breaking your sleep cycle.

Smoking a cigarette before bed does not aid sleep in any way; it simply provides the body with enough nicotine to maintain the addiction while you sleep. Then, when you become depleted of nicotine during the night, you are likely to wake up in the middle of a sleep cycle. If you doubt this theory, consider the following scenario: you smoke a cigarette before bed to relax you and help you fall asleep, then, upon waking, you smoke a morning cigarette to help you get going for the day.

So which is it, relaxant or stimulant? In theory it could be both, but then one would neutralize the other, rendering the activity somewhat pointless. The reality is that as a smoker you are simply feeding an addiction, and if you are an occasional smoker, with a habit of smoking before bed to help you sleep better, you're more likely to develop a habit and ruin your health than get a good night's sleep.

5 Facts You Didn't Know About Smoking and Sleep:

1. Nicotine stimulates the brain and promotes wakefulness.
2. Smoking can cause you to snore, which can cause intermittent waking.
3. Scientific research has proven that smokers feel less rested after sleep than non-smokers.
4. Your nicotine addiction may cause you to wake during the night with an urge to smoke.

5. Smokers endure less delta (deep) sleep and endure more alpha (light) sleep. Delta is the more important of the two in terms of body restoration.

Psychological Dependency

Smoking before bed is a bad habit to develop because it creates psychological dependency, which will add to any underlying problem preventing you from being able to sleep properly. You will begin to believe that if you don't smoke a cigarette you won't be able to sleep, or that the quality of your sleep will worsen without smoking before bed. In truth, nicotine contributes to your inability to sleep by stimulating the brain. So while smoking may not be the sole factor in your difficulty getting a good night's sleep, it is certainly a considerable hindrance.

Cutting Down and Giving Up

If you decide to cut down on the amount of cigarettes you smoke, or decide to give them up, be aware that this may periodically disrupt your sleep-wake cycle. Nicotine is highly addictive, and any change in your smoking routine may have noticeable side effects. Many smokers report difficulty sleeping for the first 7-10 days after quitting smoking, and this difficulty may continue for up to two weeks. Rest assured, however, that within two weeks of cutting down or giving up, the quality of your sleep will improve, and you will feel notably more revitalized in the morning.

Alcohol and Sleep

Like smoking, alcohol has a negative impact on sleep, and can cause habitual dependence. Having a couple of glasses of wine or a few beers to induce tiredness can quickly become a hard habit to break, and one that also wreaks havoc on the sleep cycle.

How Alcohol Disrupts the Sleep Cycle

Drinking alcohol to help you fall asleep is an easy trap to fall into because alcohol creates the illusion of making you fall asleep faster. The reason for this is that alcohol causes the brain to skip to the deep sleep stage very quickly. This might sound like a good thing, but it isn't.

While alcohol increases non-REM sleep (deep sleep), it reduces REM sleep during early sleep cycles. REM sleep (dream sleep) occurs about 90 minutes after we fall asleep, and is the mentally restorative period of sleep, essential to our mental equilibrium and memory. Tests have shown that when REM sleep is decreased, we become mentally exhausted.

Alcohol doesn't just cause you to miss out on valuable REM sleep in early sleep cycles, it also impairs sleep during the second half of the night, leading to a reduction in overall sleep time. This is the reason you may still feel tired the morning after drinking just a few drinks, even though you appeared to have slept very well.

Typically, a person has between four and six full cycles of sleep each night. However, depending on how much you drink before bed, and your alcohol tolerance level, you may endure as little as two complete sleep cycles, which will leave you feeling very tired the next day.

Dehydration

Alcohol is a diuretic, which means it encourages the body to lose extra fluid. Depending on how much alcohol you have consumed, you may need to go to the bathroom several times during the night. This loss of fluid will end up leaving you dehydrated, prompting you to wake up during the night to rehydrate the body.

Snoring

Alcohol may also disrupt your sleep by causing you to snore. This is because alcohol relaxes the muscles in the body, causing the flow of air through the throat, mouth and nose to become disrupted and vibrate. The heavier you snore, the more likely you are to wake yourself up.

Blood Sugar and Hunger

Excessive consumption of alcohol raises blood sugar levels. The body reacts to this by producing insulin to bring blood sugar levels back to normal. When your blood sugar levels suddenly drop, you are left feeling hungry, which can cause you to wake up.

If you are sensitive to sleep disruption, you should be aware of the way in which alcohol affects sleep and adjust your consumption accordingly. Alcohol is primarily a brain stimulant, and its consumption hinders the sleep cycle rather than aids it in any way. Avoid alcohol during the 30-day program, and as a general rule, do not consume alcohol within four hours of going to sleep.

Air Travel and Sleep

Unless you can afford the luxury of first or business class travel, a long-haul flight can be an uncomfortable experience, particularly for those who have trouble sleeping soundly all the way through the night in their own bed. The likelihood of getting any sleep propped upright in an airplane seat surrounded by strangers and noisy children is very slim. In addition to the difficulty of sleeping on an airplane, there is the added difficulty of adjusting to a new time zone at the other end.

Through my personal struggle of trying to sleep on long-haul flights over the years, I have developed a number of practical ways to improve sleep quality on an airplane. Below are six tips that will help you sleep better on a long haul flight.

Tip 1: Fly Overnight

Book a flight time that will enable you to fly during the night of your home country. Your body will find it easier to fall asleep during the hours it is naturally used to sleeping.

Tip 2: Get a Window Seat

Check in early and secure a window seat. Sitting in a window seat means you won't have anyone waking you up when they need to leave their seat during the flight; you will also avoid the bustle of staff going up and down the aisle.

Tip 3: Use Wax Earplugs

Buy some earplugs for the journey to block out noise and prevent you from feeling as conscious of those around you. Earplugs will help you imagine that you are in the surroundings of your own bedroom, subsequently helping you to relax and drop off to sleep. I recommend buying wax earplugs over the foam variety. Wax earplugs stay firmly in the ear and block out more sound.

Tip 4: Relax with Meditative Music

Utilize the Primal Sleep Audio tracks to lower your brainwave activity and get you into a meditative mental state that's suitable to drift off into comfortable sleep. It's especially important to lower your brainwave activity when the stressful experience of flying is affecting you.

Tip 5: Create a Bed

If you manage to secure the window seat, ask for two extra pillows to help in creating a makeshift bed. Tip your chair back as far as it will go. Insert one pillow into the lumbar of your back, and use the other two to make a comfortable rest on the window ledge. This enables you to create a sense of lying down as you would in bed. You probably won't sleep for more than four hours like this, but that will be enough to get you through your day of arrival. Make use of the blanket provided, too. Your body will associate the blanket with being in bed, indicating to the brain that you are preparing to sleep.

Tip 6: Tell Your Brain it's Time for Bed

Regardless of the fact that you are flying, you can still continue with aspects of your Six Steps routine to let your body know that it is time to sleep. Work your way through the following list before attempting to go to sleep:

1. Go to the bathroom.
2. Wash your face.
3. Brush your teeth.
4. Moisturize your face.
5. Do some light stretching in your seat.
6. Drink some water to rehydrate.

Adjusting to a New Time Zone (Jet Lag)

Adjusting to a new time zone can be particularly difficult for those sensitive to changes to the sleep-wake cycle. It can take up to five days to recover from jet lag, and symptoms may include daytime sleepiness, nightly insomnia, loss of appetite and poor coordination. Symptoms are worse when traveling west to east, and when crossing four or more time zones. You can reduce jet lag by ensuring you aren't sleep-deprived before you travel, by not drinking alcohol on the flight and by drinking plenty of water on the plane and upon arrival at your destination.

The fastest way to adjust to a new time zone is to stay awake until the same time you would normally go to sleep in your home country. Even if you don't sleep well the first night, set your alarm clock and wake at the same time (local time) as you would in your home country.

Expose yourself to daylight as soon as you wake up, and try not to nap during the day. If you are staying for just a couple of days, you can try remaining on your home country's time zone. However, if you're staying for more than four days, you should try to adjust your body clock to the new time zone.

A Final Word

I hope that the advice in this book has motivated you to improve your sleep health by properly aligning your sleep-wake cycle with Mother Nature. If you are someone who takes sleeping pills, or has considered taking pills, I hope you have realized that simple adjustments to your lifestyle and environment will enable you to sleep as effortlessly as nature intended.

There is a world of science related to sleep, but the reality is we don't need to know the ins and outs of it to enhance our lives with quality sleep. All we have to do is live naturally and healthily, and good quality sleep will follow its natural course. Sleeping problems begin to arise when we over-analyze sleep itself, rather than focusing on improving our broader health through diet and lifestyle.

Start improving the health of your sleep-wake cycle today by implementing the Six Steps. Go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning for the next 30-days. Create a sleep-friendly lifestyle and environment, and begin connecting your body back with the natural order of sleep.

Make a commitment today to improve your health. Wake early and sleep early (at the suggested times). Follow the Paleo diet as best you can, exercise every day and limit your exposure to electronic devices in the evening. If you have a bad night's sleep, simply let it go and continue your day as if you'd slept well. Properly manage your stress so that it doesn't fuel sleep anxiety.

Within just a few days of following the Primal Sleep program, you will begin to feel your body clock readjusting. You will feel tired for the first few days, but simultaneously you'll notice an increase in alertness, productivity and general happiness. Within a week you'll be enjoying nights of solid, refreshing sleep, akin to those you enjoyed as a child.

Sleep is a natural process of human life, something humans have been doing since day one. The body thrives on good-quality sleep, as it does when fed good-quality food. By implementing a sleep-wake cycle that complements the biological processes in the body, you will begin to feel like a new person.

Thank you for letting me share my knowledge, and for making my years of suffering insomnia worthwhile.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Sinick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dave and the PaleoHacks Team

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