

CHECKLISTS FOR BETTER SLEEP

YOUR SLEEP ENVIRONMENT



- ✓ Develop a consistent sleep schedule by waking up and going to sleep at the same time each day—including weekends.
- ✓ Create a Sleep Sanctuary: Get rid of anything that might distract you from restful sleep. Eliminate noises, lights (even the tiny lights of an alarm clock can disturb good sleep), TV and computer.
- ✓ Use your bed for only two things—sleep and sex.
- ✓ Science confirms the old adage to not go to sleep angry with your spouse. According to a sleep research, the quality of sleep and the quality of a couple's relationship satisfaction are linked. Remove anger and resentment from the bedroom.
- ✓ Keeping the temperature in your bedroom on the cool side. For proper serotonin production, the ideal sleeping temperature is below 70° F (20-21° C).
- ✓ Replace an uncomfortable bed. You are in bed about a third of your life. Invest in a good bed. It is much cheaper than poor health.
- ✓ Teach children to sleep well by removing all distractions from the bedroom, including video games.

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- ✓ Avoid using an electric blanket.
- ✓ Indulge in a pleasurable bedtime ritual. It might be a warm bath, light snack or time with your favorite hobby.



- ✓ Listen to soft music as you get ready for bed. It will relax your mind and give you an audible trigger of the fact it is time to sleep.

- ✓ Avoid overexposure to artificial and fluorescent lighting as much as possible, particularly near bedtime.

- ✓ Move bedroom clocks out of view. Not only does the light affect your rest – the anxiety of watching the minutes tick by and thinking about how exhausted you are going to be is certain to increase insomnia.
- ✓ It is important to have a dark bedroom at night. It is equally important that you be exposed to at least 30 minutes of sunlight each day. Get outside to let your body experience the contrast in your circadian rhythm.
- ✓ If you have spent more than 20 minutes trying to get to sleep—get up! Staying in bed will become stressful and stress does not promote sleep. Find a relaxing activity such as jigsaw puzzles, reading or meditation until you feel sleepy.

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- ✓ Try an air ionizer. That may sound like strange advice, but there is science behind the suggestion. Ionized air has negatively charged particles like you find around running water, like the ocean or near a waterfall. You can feel the pleasant affects to those negative ions. In contrast, positive ions like what are generated by warm winds moving over dry land in California are known to increase suicide rates, automobile accidents and irritability.

PREPARE YOUR BODY



- ✓ Avoid caffeine and nicotine. If you must consume them, limit use of cigarettes, coffee, tea, chocolate and soda in the hours just before bedtime.

- ✓ Eliminate the "nightcap" from your nightly habits. It may help you doze off, but alcohol keeps you in the lighter stages of sleep and can cause you to miss the renewal stages. You also tend to wake up in the middle of the night when you are no longer sedated.
- ✓ Sleep is enhanced by regular exercise. However, exercise close to bedtime causes the release of natural stimulants, which keep the brain from relaxing and getting ready for sleep.

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✓ Early morning exercise has been shown to be an excellent way to wake the body up and help it function well throughout the day. After your exercise routine, if you have the energy to work all day, your body will be ready to slow down and rest at night.

- ✓ When you have an injury, don't stop whatever exercise you can manage (according to your doctor's advice, of course). Inactivity can cause your body functions to become sluggish and can lead to insomnia long after you have physically recovered.
- ✓ Avoid large meals late at night. If you cannot avoid a late meal, make sure you have a good source of protein and make the portions smaller. You will wake up hungry and ready to face a new day with vigor.
- ✓ Avoid tyramine containing foods in the evening such as bananas, chocolate, liver, caviar, beans, avocado, yogurt, cheese, beer, wine and fermented soy bean products.
- ✓ Increase tryptophan rich foods like pumpkin seeds, turkey, chicken, tofu, chicken livers, and spirulina.
- ✓ Eat alkaline foods like figs, potato, pineapple, apri-

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cots, dates, almonds, turnips, spinach and carrots. An alkaline body helps with sleep's anabolic processes.

- ✓ Consume melatonin rich herbs like St. John's Wort, feverfew, black and white mustard seeds and huang-qin.



- ✓ Fight the urge to sleep on the couch right after dinner. If you find yourself getting sleepy way before bedtime, get up. Do something mildly stimulating to avoid falling asleep. Wash

the dishes. Call a friend. Keep engaged until it is time to go to bed for the night.

- ✓ Some medicines can interrupt sleep by reducing melatonin. Commonly prescribed blood pressure, asthma and heart meds are known for delaying sleep. Also common over-the-counter meds like acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen. Remember that herbal and over-the-counter medications for a cold can keep you awake as well.
- ✓ Snoring increases when you drink alcohol and can restrict airflow into your lungs, which will compromise your restful sleep. With this reduced oxygen in your blood it can also contribute to a hangover.
- ✓ Both fatty and spicy foods can cause heartburn and lead to difficulty falling asleep and keep you from getting comfortable because of the indigestion.

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- ✓ Expect a dip in your natural alertness between 2-4pm. A 15-minute nap should get you back into full wakefulness.
- ✓ Do not nap more than 20 minutes. More than that will draw you into deep sleep and you will wake feeling even worse when you wake up. Don't miss my suggested 'alternative' to a nap in the next section.
- ✓ Play solitaire, a simple crossword puzzle or some other undemanding, repetitive game.

PREPARE YOUR MIND



- ✓ Challenge any negative attitudes about sleep that you have developed over time. It is important that you recognize any self-defeating thoughts and replace them with more realistic thoughts that empower your ability to sleep.

- ✓ Ease your anxious mind by following a ritual of self-indulgence before going to bed.
- ✓ Meditation has been found to improve sleep. The practice of slowing your brain down and listening to your body's wisdom does wonders for promoting sleep. If you haven't guessed yet, this is the 'alternative' I recom-

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ment rather than taking a 'nap'. Where to start with meditation? I make that easy for you! Simply go to my website [Mindivine](#) and browse through the recordings. The perfect product is, the [Ten-Minute Stress Manager](#). It produces a deep rest, along with a profound sense of wellbeing and alertness within 10 minutes. You will obtain more benefit in following 'The Ten-Minute Stress Manager' in 10 minutes than what you'll get from a 20 minute nap.

- ✓ Simply breathing with intention can relax your body. As you bring the breath in, let your abdomen rise (don't just inflate your chest) as the air passes through your nose. Hold for 3 seconds. Then breathe out slowly allowing the air to escape the throat and chest first – ending with a push of the abdomen to expel as much air as comfortably possible. Try to practice this breathing for 10 minutes before going to bed.



- ✓ Count something—maybe sheep—the rhythm and monotony of the process will drop your mind into boredom and sleepiness. Some people will become aroused by the mental activity of counting. If that happens to you, don't use this technique.

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- ✓ Avoid exaggeration where you expect having difficulty sleeping, such as thinking, "This happens every night. I am going to have another night of sleepless misery."
- ✓ Don't allow yourself to anticipate the catastrophe of the next day's sleepiness. You can do your job well without a full night's sleep and the confidence will help you rest.
- ✓ Predicting the future of how long it will take to get to sleep or the hopelessness of overcoming the insomnia is your enemy. The uncertainty of the future is your friend. Accept that you cannot keep all things under control to release the stress.



- ✓ Try using aromatherapy with such herbs as lavender, valerian or other relaxing herbs.
- ✓ Unwind with relaxing music or reading a good book.

- ✓ Take a luxurious hot bath before bed. The drop in body temperature may help you feel sleepy.
- ✓ Use your imagination by thinking of something calming such as a waterfall. Create an image of your perfect house in minute detail. Imagine being with someone you care about—your lover or spouse, may—in a

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peaceful place. Imagine you are a computer and you are going through the process of shutting down with all excess functions being eliminated.

- ✓ Easing Into Sleep is a guided imagery process developed by Dr. Emmett Miller and is played whilst you're in bed. You can listen to a sample of it and notice how calming it sounds. It guides you to release the energy and stresses of the day, puts it behind you and focuses the mind to relax deeply. Many people fall asleep before the audio finishes.

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If you have checked everything off this list and still have trouble sleeping, it is probably time to get the advice of a Naturopath or your medical health practitioner you trust.

Remember that sleep is not optional. Without proper sleep there will always be consequences. We are not saying that you need a certain number of hours sleeping. If you feel alert all day without any drowsiness you may have gotten adequate sleep, even if it is only 4 hours. Listen to your body. Pay attention to signals that it is not operating properly and seek health professionals to help you if you are not able to remedy your sleep issues. Your health depends on it.

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About George Parker



George Parker, owner of the websites, [BalanSoul](#) and [Mindivine](#), is a qualified practicing naturopath dedicated to helping people find wellness the world over. He offers worldwide distance treatments and consultations, as well as face-to-face sessions in Victoria, Australia. **Parker specialises in the treatment of mental health disorders including stress, anxiety and depression.** He also has special interests in **cardiovascular disease** and **cancer treatment support** and also practices general naturopathy and preventative medicine. No matter how big or small your health concerns are, George Parker is ready to help you on your journey to wellness of body, mind, and spirit.

For more information, visit [BalanSoul](#) or send an email to:

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