

rest

for the weary

spiritual & practical tips for better sleep



Elizabeth A. Johnson, Author of 'Touching the Hem'

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for better sleep**

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*The author gratefully acknowledges
the various sources consulted over the years
which have provided the information
and ideas contained herein.*

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this thing called sleep

I have never liked going to bed. It always felt like I was missing out on so much by hiding under the covers for eight hours. I wanted to be up *doing* things – spending time with people, reading exciting novels, or at least marking things off my to-do list. Sleep felt like a waste of time, and its only redeeming quality was the interesting dreams I would have.

Then insomnia reared its ugly head, and I started hating bedtime even more. It felt like a double waste of time: not only was I forced to spend the night not doing anything fun or productive, but I couldn't sleep either. To say I grew frustrated was an understatement.

How about you? What is your typical attitude about sleep – do you love it, hate it, or fall somewhere in the middle of those two extremes? Consider for a moment, if you never have before:

- Does it feel like an unnecessary requirement which you can never quite fulfill? The more elusive it gets, the harder you try . . . which only it makes it more elusive.
- Does admitting your need for sleep feel like a sign of weakness or laziness? After all, there's so much to be done that you shouldn't stop to rest.
- Does it make you anxious or depressed? You start each day worried about how poorly you slept the night before, and begin each night feeling overwhelmed at the thought of going to bed and sleeping poorly yet again.

These are all common responses – and very *human* responses – to the pervasive problem of sleeplessness. In fact, if you were to take an informal poll of your friends and family, at least one-third of them would probably admit to having trouble sleeping on a regular basis.

Carrying a continual sleep deficit can be frustrating – and even harmful. It dulls your mental awareness, impedes your judgment, slows your reaction time,

interferes with your body's autonomic systems, and gets in the way of almost every conversation as you gripe, whine, or simply struggle to think clearly.

But have you ever realized that your attitude toward sleep – whether you consider it a stressful burden or a refreshing pleasure – affects how you approach each night?

If the very thought of sleep frustrates or overwhelms you, then you'll go to bed each night feeling anxious and stressed, which will only hurt your ability to relax and sleep. If it feels like a chore, you will put it off and end up working far past your limit of effectiveness, then get up the next morning feeling grumpy and resentful.

But if you can change your perspective of sleep – even if nothing else changes – you will no longer be stressed about bedtime, and your mind and body will be more equipped to handle whatever sleep deficit you may experience.

The only way to effectively change your perspective is to look in the one place that contains all truth. God's Word provides everything we need to pursue godliness, despite whatever afflictions we might experience. And it contains truth which directly relates to our pursuit of sleep.

Consider these six basic truths:

1. ***God created sleep.*** That might seem obvious, but think about it: sleep was not man's invention. It was not something the devil came up with to tempt us with (although it can certainly become a temptation). God created it in the very beginning of time when He put Adam into a deep sleep and formed Eve from Adam's rib.
2. ***God created mankind with specific foundational needs.*** One of those needs is sleep. The required amount may vary from person to person, but we *all* need sleep: no person has been created who does not need to sleep, and to deny that is to deny God's intention for His creation. It sounds simple enough, but how often do we act like we know our physical needs better than the One who created us?

3. **God created sleep for our benefit.** Obviously, God Himself does not need to sleep – in fact, we are told in Psalm 121 that He *never slumbers nor sleeps*. Yet we read in Genesis that He did at least stop and *rest* after the six days of creation, not because He was tired but to establish a pattern for us to follow. We are also to rest after working, and we are to rest regularly. God established that pattern not to limit us, but because it truly benefits us both physically and psychologically. For example: during sleep the body recuperates from daily activity, the endocrine system recalibrates, the brain sorts through all the input from the day and forms long-term memories . . . sleep is truly a *gift* from God!
4. **God created you with unique limitations.** You may have a medical condition which requires you to get more sleep than others, or which prohibits you from getting even the minimum amount of necessary sleep. You may be in a season of life which interferes with your ability to sleep, such as raising children or caring for an elderly loved one. Yet none of this is an oversight on God’s part: He knows your needs, and He has a purpose in calling you to this season of sleeplessness.
5. **God is omniscient.** God created you: He knows that your body was created to need sleep. He knows the limitations that interrupt or preclude your sleep. He knows how much sleep you *think* you need – and how much you *actually* need. He even knows your needs for the day after you don’t sleep! You can trust that He sees your limitations, your needs, and your desires. He overlooks nothing.
6. **God is sufficient for any lack we experience.** Too often we idolize the desire to be free from physical afflictions – like insomnia. Yet when the Apostle Paul begged God to remove his “thorn in the flesh,” he did not experience deliverance *from* his infirmity but deliverance *through* it (2 Corinthians 12:8-10). Rather than removing the thorn, God reassured him of His all-sufficient grace and unending strength that could sustain him even in his weakest moments. And when we learn to rest in that truth, as Paul did, we can begin to understand His sufficiency in ways we never would have previously imagined.

Have you ever experienced that all-sufficient strength? I certainly have! There are times when His strength is the only way I make it through the day. When my brain betrays my body's need for sleep, and I toss and turn all night struggling to rest, then have to get up and work the next day, there is no possible way to meet my God-given responsibilities in my own depleted strength.

Only God's strength is enough to carry me through each moment.

But as hard or as frequent as those days may seem, discovering how secure and substantial God's strength is for me is a lesson that I wouldn't trade for anything!

Living each moment supported only by God's grace not only strengthens my relationship with Him, but also affects my whole attitude about going to bed each night.

I don't need to worry about whether I'll sleep well. I don't need to let anxiety take over at 2 AM. I don't need to get up the next morning feeling stressed and overwhelmed after a night of tossing and turning. Because God's grace is enough to carry me through anything, no matter how weak I may feel.

something to remember:

- ➔ God knows your needs.
- ➔ God knows what you *think* you need.
- ➔ He is sufficient for whatever lack there is between the two!

the same old story

As prevalent as it is, insomnia looks different for everyone.

Some people have difficulty falling asleep; some have trouble staying asleep throughout the night, and some sleep long hours but never wake up feeling refreshed.

Some people have occasional nights of sleeplessness, without any sort of regular pattern or frequency; others seem to cycle between good nights and bad, often getting stuck on the bad.

Some people only have trouble sleeping when they're away from home; others have difficulty sleeping in their own bed, but snooze wonderfully on the sofa, in a guest room, or at a friend's house.

Some people can easily connect their sleeplessness to a recent injury, medication side effect, or temporary season of life – like a major life transition or different work schedule; others seem to have trouble sleeping no matter what their physical circumstances or stress levels.

No matter what insomnia looks like for you, or for your friends, or for your family, it all ends with the same old story: not enough sleep.

And whether you receive an official medical diagnosis after myriad tests and prescriptions and evaluations, or simply self-diagnose after reading and researching sleep problems, it wears on you.

It weakens your physical strength, upsets your emotional stability, and limits your mental alertness. You stress about how much sleep you're missing. You spend your days worrying about your nights. You get grumpy and frustrated trying to figure out the cause.

It affects your relationships, your work, and your physical well-being.

Sound familiar?

I should know: I've had insomnia for years.

It started in high school, but I did what any teenager would do and enjoyed the extra time to read or entertain myself. It was barely noticeable in college, since I followed the usual pattern of waking up too early and staying up too late.

It reared its ugly head after graduation, however. Suddenly I was working forty hours a week, cramming my social life into nights and weekends, and the lack of adequate sleep became quite obvious.

I changed my habits. I went to bed by midnight every night – even weekends. I planned fewer social events in the evenings. I established consistent evening and morning routines.

But I still couldn't sleep.

I would go to bed, then toss and turn all night. I would finally fall asleep, only to wake up less than an hour later. I would struggle to get back to sleep, only to drift off moments before my alarm went off.

I was so tired, and yet I could do nothing about it. Nothing I tried brought relief. It was affecting my work, destroying my concentration, and ruining my social life.

Finally, I asked my doctor for help. She went through a series of questions, asking about everything from life events to medications to my normal sleeping environment.

Nothing jumped out at us, and so she diagnosed me with chronic primary insomnia.

- *Chronic* meant there was difficulty most nights of the week, and for periods of time lasting longer than three months.
- *Primary* meant there was no obvious cause for sleeplessness (like poor sleep hygiene, medication, physical or mental stress).
- *Insomnia* meant, in my case, both trouble falling asleep and trouble staying asleep.

I have been reading about insomnia ever since, trying to improve both the quality and quantity of my sleep.

Some things I've tried have worked and been incorporated into my nightly routine. Other things I tried for a few weeks or months and they did nothing. Some things even made it worse, and I quickly gave up on them!

The suggestions I am about to share with you have come from that personal experience and study.

Please note: I do not have a medical degree. I have never attended medical school, or studied medicine in any official capacity. I am not a doctor, nurse, or licensed practitioner.

I do, however, have common sense! I can read medical books and evaluate their reputability. I can make logs and find correlating patterns, and follow those patterns to their root causes. I can reason through different options and logically pinpoint what is worth trying – and discard whatever is faddish or not worth investing in.

I also know a good bit about the human body from living with a long-term illness. Like most patients with chronic illness, I have had to be my own best advocate – which means knowing my body better than any doctor, being aware of what helps and what hinders, and recognizing my body's rhythms and cycles.

Obviously, you are not me, and your body's needs are not the same as my body's needs. What helps me may not help you; and what does nothing for me may be the ideal solution for you.

Keep that in mind as you work through these suggestions. Read them as from a trusted friend or loved one, but remember: you probably know your body better than anyone else does!

something to remember:

- ➔ Keep an open mind.
- ➔ Be willing to try something different.
- ➔ Realize that there's no "one size fits all" solution.

a good place to start

Before you start working through the tips, you need to establish a base line so you can gain a clearer picture of what needs to change. For instance:

- Do you know whether you wake up around the same times every night or every morning?
- Do you know whether particular foods or activities consistently affect how quickly you get to sleep?
- Do you know whether certain nights of week are worse than others?

Keeping a simple sleep log for 2-3 weeks is the greatest thing you can do to start improving your sleep patterns.

It will give you a baseline to evaluate how long and how well you actually *do* sleep each night, which will help you determine your normal sleeping patterns. It will also help you evaluate basic factors that could be hindering your sleep, such as activity levels or trigger foods. And if you ever decide to talk with your doctor about sleeplessness, these are some of the first questions they will ask you – in which case, you would already have a record to show them.

So, best-case scenario? You determine the root cause easily after 2-3 weeks of consistent logging, make a simple adjustment, and start sleeping better almost immediately.

Worst-case? You eliminate several possible causes after 2-3 weeks of consistent logging, confidently determining what is *not* the problem, and then begin working through the other tips in this book immediately.

It seems like a win-win scenario – for minimal amount of effort and expense.

Just as an example, here are some discoveries I made from my own sleep log:

- Writing blog posts or book material after supper keeps me awake longer.
- Activity levels during the day had little effect on my sleep behavior.

- Caffeine is only a problem when I drink it after 4 PM.
- Bedtime snacks only made a slight difference, but carb-heavy snacks were better than protein-heavy snacks.
- Shifting my bedtime 30 minutes later made it harder to fall asleep.

And the most encouraging thing I noticed? Even after the worst nights, I still made it through the following day.

Keeping the sleep log made me realize the amount “sleep anxiety” that I had been practicing. But once I knew the data was being recorded every day, I stopped fretting so much about it at night!

I no longer needed to remember every time I saw on the clock. I no longer needed to count how long I’d been awake. I could record whatever I remembered the next morning, and accept anything else as insignificant.

So how do you get started? It’s as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Get a small notebook or journal. You’ll need one page per day, so make sure you have at least 21 blank pages.
2. Print off [this list of questions](#) (please [email me](#) if you have any trouble accessing it). Consider printing it on a piece of sturdy cardstock, so it will hold up for a while.
3. Make it easy to get started *tonight*: place your notebook and a pen where you’ll be sure to see it before bed – maybe on your pillow or nightstand.

Consider asking a friend or family member to keep you accountable. Just texting them after you’ve filled out your log each day may mean the difference between success and failure.

Also, you may need to modify some questions to fit your unique circumstances. Do so now, if you want, or try my questions for a week and then adjust as needed.

something to remember:

- ➔ The first step to finding a solution for any problem is determining the root cause.
- ➔ The sooner you start charting, the sooner you'll figure it out, and the sooner you'll start sleeping better.

setting the stage

Now that you've started keeping your log, let's consider some basic factors that might be affecting your sleep. The easiest, most obvious place to start is by evaluating your sleeping environment.

The three environmental factors that most affect your quality of sleep are light, sound, and temperature.

Why? Because these three factors significantly affect your body's production of melatonin, the hormone that helps you sleep when it gets dark and wake up when it gets light.

Hormones help regulate almost everything in your body – including your heartbeat, body temperature, energy levels, blood sugar, and circadian rhythms.

While it is difficult to control the exact levels of each hormone without medication, especially ones (like melatonin) that vary throughout the day, there are ways to prompt them to increase or decrease their levels. More specifically, adjusting things like light, sound, and temperature within your sleeping environment can help stimulate melatonin when you need it most.

If possible, head to your bedroom now and consider the following aspects of your sleeping environment.

First, close your blinds or curtains to simulate how they usually are at night.

- Does any light shine through the curtains or blinds? What about around the edges?
- Does anything else in the room light up – like an alarm clock, radio, laptop or phone charger, or humidifier?
- If you sleep with your door open, does any light come through from the rest of the house?

Any light at all, even the glow of an alarm clock, can hinder the production of melatonin and make it harder to sleep.

The good news is, once you note where the light is coming from, it's easy to figure out a way to cover or remove it entirely.

For example, a cell phone can simply be turned face-down to block the charging light. A humidifier can be turned so the dial is towards the wall, or at least angled away from the head of your bed. A radio light can be covered with a small cloth or piece of duct tape.

If there's too much light coming through your door or windows, you have two basic options. The more permanent solution is to invest in some good blackout curtains. You can find a basic style at Walmart for less than \$25, or check an online retailer like Amazon for more color options.

The next best option is a good eye mask. Again, check Walmart for the \$5 variety. Just keep in mind that elastic wears out and you probably will have to replace it in a year or two.

Next, close your eyes and listen.

- What outside sounds do you hear that usually make noise throughout the night?
- Does anything in your room make noise throughout the night – like a radio, charger, or other electronic device?

A noisy environment will distract your mind from relaxing and hinder you from getting your best sleep.

Some sounds are beyond our control – like a neighbor who leaves for work at 3AM or a nearby dog that barks at night. And of course, things like baby monitors cannot be moved. But there are also sounds that you *can* control, and the point is to eliminate as many of those as possible.

Learn to turn your phone on silent – or at least set it to allow priority interruptions only (in case of emergencies). Turn off the radio or television, even

if you think you need the background noise to sleep. If possible, move anything else that makes noise during the night outside your bedroom.

Now consider introducing some white noise – basically, a level of sound that cancels out other distracting noises. If you live in a noisy neighborhood, or have roommates who watch television at night, or even if you suffer from ringing in your ears, white noise can make a quantifiable difference in your sleep habits.

The easiest option is downloading a free white noise app for your smartphone. There are several good ones available, so ask your friends for their favorite or simply pick one that sounds good. Just be sure to try it *before* you go to bed, so you don't stay up too late fiddling with the settings.

Another alternative is running a small desktop or standalone fan near your bed. If you choose to purchase one, avoid any that claim to be extra quiet, since they probably won't mask enough of the outside noises.

Finally, staying as calm and still as possible, consider how the air feels.

- How cool does the air feel on your skin?
- Does it feel dry or humid?
- Do you have adequate blankets within reach of your bed?
- Do you have a ceiling or desk fan in the room?

If the room is too warm or too humid, you'll end up tossing and turning all night trying to get comfortable. If the room is too cold, you'll end up clenching the covers tightly and wake up with sore knuckles. If the room is too dry, you'll wake up with a stuffy nose or sinus drainage.

Consider buying an inexpensive hygrometer to measure the humidity of the room. The optimal range for most people is between 40–60%. If your room is consistently at the low end of the spectrum, a simple \$25 *humidifier* can make a vast improvement in your nighttime comfort. If your room is consistently *too* humid, consider running a ceiling fan or investing in a *dehumidifier*.

Learn to keep an eye on the temperature too. If you don't already have a digital thermostat, consider investing in one: it will be a lot easier to adjust if you know exactly what temperature you need it at.

Cooler air will calm your body's rhythms – like your heart rate, breathing, responsiveness – and allow you to sleep more deeply. Of course, some people tolerate cold better than others. I personally struggle with anything below 68. Scar tissue in my airway makes it difficult to breathe when the air gets too cold and dry; my nose bleeds; and poor circulation makes my joints and muscles very tight and constricted. So be sensitive to how others in your home might be affected by colder air, and be willing to work toward an optimal solution for everyone.

But play with the temperatures – and the humidity levels – until you find the optimal setting for *you*. It will be worth the trial and error!

something to remember:

- ➔ Remember the three keys to creating an ideal sleep environment: dark, quiet, and cool.
- ➔ Be willing to experiment and invest, little by little, until you find the ideal settings.

time to say goodnight

The final three hours before you go to bed are the most crucial hours for preparing your mind and body to sleep. It is vital to establish and keep a regular nightly routine, to train your body to run on “autopilot” as much as possible and promote a state of relaxation.

Avoid doing anything stimulating, complex, or stressful – basically anything that will increase your heart rate. That can include movies or discussions that provoke extreme excitement or anger, making difficult decisions, exercising, eating energizing foods, listening to loud music, sitting in a brightly lit room, or even reading an intense novel.

Here are a few more suggestions:

- Turn off those screens at least 1 hour before you go to bed. The blue-based light of computers, smartphones, and televisions actually trigger the mind to be more alert. The only screens that do not contain that type of light are dedicated e-readers with e-ink displays, like the Kindle (but not the Kindle Fire or any other tablet). You might also consider downloading an app (like [this one](#) for Android) that adds a red filter to your screen at a preset time each night.
- Do something calming and relaxing that does *not* involve a media screen. Read, crochet, draw, play music, write a letter, call a friend . . .
- If you like to read, pay attention to how different genres affect your ability to sleep. Some may wake you up too much, and keep your brain actively working while your body is trying to sleep.
- Stretch – but don’t exercise. Avoid getting your heart rate up. Gentle yoga is a great choice for pre-bedtime relaxation.
- Drink something calming: warm milk, hot herbal tea (chamomile, lavender, valerian). Avoid anything caffeinated, spicy, or too energizing (like peppermint).
- Eat a small nutritious carb-based snack (whole wheat toast with jam, small bowl of cheerios, etc.). Too much protein will gear your body up to work

harder; too much sugar will give you a boost. A light snack of carbohydrates will actually calm your mind and allow your body to relax. Just avoid anything heavy (like a whole sandwich or a bowl of oatmeal) that could wake up your digestive system and get the blood flowing too much.

Whatever you do in the last few hours of the evening, avoid getting in bed until the final hour before sleep. You need to condition your body to associate your bed with sleeping.

It also helps to set an evening alarm, so you know when to stop whatever you're doing and get to bed.

For example, I like to read a bit of fiction every night before going to bed; it helps me wind down and relaxes my mind. But without an alarm, I can easily keep reading until well after midnight... then have trouble getting to sleep whenever I finally put the book down. But setting an alarm for 10:30 every night reminds me to stop reading (though I usually finish the chapter) and helps me get to bed around the same time each night.

Try to get to bed within the same 30-minute range every night . . . no matter what. Try to also get up within the same 30-minute range every day . . . no matter what.

Rising at different times each morning will confuse your body clock and nudge it toward the path of least resistance – the latest time you pick to rise during any given week. But when you stay in bed longer on certain days (like the weekend), your body thinks it has more time to sleep, and thus you start taking longer to *get* to sleep and wake up more frequently.

The goal is to condense the time you are actually in bed, trying to sleep, to the smallest possible amount.

So pick the earliest time you need to get up in the next week. Set your alarm for that time every day – and only allow yourself to hit the snooze button once, if at all. It will be tremendously hard the first few days, but I promise, it will get easier.

After about a week, you should start noticing a quantifiable improvement in your sleep, and it should be getting easier to wake up in the mornings.

If you notice improvement in one of those areas, but not both, then you need to make some adjustments:

- If your sleep improves but it's still hard to get up, move your bedtime earlier by 15 minutes – for one week at a time – until you start feeling consistently rested.
- If you start waking up just before your alarm goes off, but still have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, move your wakeup time earlier by 15 minutes. Try that for one week, and adjust again as needed until you start sleeping better.

Keep in mind that most people actually do wake up in between sleep cycles – though many people don't wake up enough to actually remember it the next morning. So if you are waking up, then immediately falling back to sleep, that's okay. There's nothing that needs to be changed or improved: it's completely normal.

Also keep in mind that you might not need the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep. You may need less – or you may need more! Everyone is different, and what works for your spouse or best friend may not work for you. Also, your sleep needs change over time, so you may need to go through this process again in the future.

something to remember:

- ➔ Your body thrives on routine: going to bed and getting up at the same time every day will train your body to sleep the same hours each night.
- ➔ Old habits die hard: adjusting your circadian rhythm will take time, so be patient.

zero to forty winks

Now for the hard part: getting to sleep and staying there. Start by relaxing your body, then focus on quieting your spirit and calming your mind.

Are you running through everything that happened that day? Start journaling instead. It doesn't have to be pretty or perfect; just get those thoughts on paper and out of your head. Be specific, so you don't leave details rolling around in your mind; but don't hash things out too much or you'll be writing all night!

Are you thinking through everything that might happen tomorrow? Whether it's a to-do list, ideas to ponder, decisions to make – write it down. Get it on paper, and out of your head.

Are you worried? Write down your worries, and pray over them. Release the situation to God. His hands are perfectly capable of holding the situation gently and wisely. He never slumbers or sleeps; He will watch over you – and it – while you rest.

Are you excited? Write down a few lines about whatever is thrilling you, and then remember that it won't happen any sooner if you stay awake. Turn your mind to something more serious. Find some aspect of the situation that needs prayer, and commit it to God. He knows your desires and your needs. He will guide you perfectly, if you are willing to follow Him.

Find something to focus on that does not excite you or worry you. Of course, the age-old adage is to count sheep – but does that really work for anyone?

Here are some other tips and tricks to relax your mind and body:

- Count sheep – or some other animal – but picture each one in detail, and make each unique from the one preceding it.
- Purchase some good-quality lavender essential oil – diffuse it, massage a small amount around your temples or on the soles of your feet, or place a few drops on your pillowcase.

- Starting at your toes, focus on each of your muscles (or muscle groups) individually. Tense them gently, then deliberately relax them. Slowly work your way up toward the top of your spine.
- Calm your breathing with the 4-7-8 technique. Inhale through your nose (if possible) for 4 counts; hold your breath for 7 counts; then exhale through your mouth for 8 counts. Repeat 2-3 times. This can calm your heart rate, relax your body, and focus and quiet your mind.
- Listen as hard as you can to the white noise or the silence. Imagine you can feel it, see it, and hear it.
- Use a smartphone app to listen to a passage of Scripture –the historical books are great for stopping a distracted hundred-mile-an-hour brain, and the Psalms are great for calming a worried heart. Just make sure the narrator has a calm, relaxing voice – or it will keep you awake longer!
- Pray for others who come to mind. Or try working through the alphabet – pick someone for each letter and pray for them, even if you don't know them that well.
- Choose of one or two specific people who are going through difficult trials. Pray comprehensively for every aspect of their situation: spiritual, emotional, physical, mental, relational, financial, etc.
- Praise God through the alphabet: choose character traits or names of God that begin with each letter, and thank Him for that aspect of Himself.
- Work your way through Scripture, meditating on verses that start with each letter of the alphabet.
- Think through the words of a favorite hymn or praise song. Now pray through it carefully and earnestly.
- Picture what you think heaven might look like. Include the descriptions given in Revelation 21-22, and make sure to keep God at the center!
- Visualize one of your favorite places to relax (mine is a cabin porch in the Nantahala forest!). Use your senses to feel the air on your face, smell the breeze or the tantalizing aromas, hear the leaves or the waves or the people.
- Write a story in your mind, with you as the main character, which ends with you falling asleep.
- Pretend you have a reason to stay awake – guests arriving at midnight, a work call coming at 2 AM – and keep repeating to yourself, “I need to stay

awake.” You will eventually get tired of fighting it, and drift off calmly to sleep.

Instead of running through these ideas one after another, checking the time every thirty minutes, and trying too hard to fall asleep – set a predetermined length of time that you give yourself to fall asleep. Then relax, and forget about trying to get there.

If you happen to check the clock and find that your predetermined amount of time has passed, get up and do something else – just make sure it’s something calm!

You can walk slowly around the house, read something non-stimulating, spend time rubbing your pet, gaze out at the night sky. Also consider brewing a cup of chamomile tea, and sip it as you relax for 30-60 minutes, or until you start feeling drowsy.

something to remember:

- ➔ Try to stay calm and unperturbed: the more you stress about getting to sleep, the harder it will be.
- ➔ Give your mind something else to focus on, but nothing too complex or stimulating!

final thoughts

It probably sounds counterintuitive, but it takes work to rest well. It takes time to change your perspective, and willingness to change your habits.

But I hope you'll make the effort to do both. Consider each of these truths and tips carefully, and invest in the tools that will help. Then make a plan and determine to stick to it.

Just don't get so stressed about *trying* to sleep better that it keeps you awake. Sleep is vital, but be patient and remain calm. And remember the two golden rules of establishing sleep-quotas:

- You probably get more sleep than you realize.
- You probably need less sleep than you think.

Maintaining a sleep log will help you recognize those truths firsthand!

Ask your friends and family for suggestions too. Everyone's insomnia is different, and everyone's sleep needs are different. But listen to what they recommend, keep an open mind, and be willing to try something new if you think it may help.

Don't be afraid to ask your doctor for help either. Sleeping pills often get a bad rap, but there are many options available right now (which are non-habit-forming with little or no side effects) that can make a huge difference. And for some people, that's the only thing that will help. There are also some great supplements available over the counter, like valerian or melatonin, which you can discuss with your doctor.

Finally, rejoice in the opportunity you have *right now* to reflect God's glory through physical suffering. Trust God to know how much sleep you truly need, and then believe that He will provide somehow – either by giving you the rest your body craves, or by sustaining you through your exhaustion.

Whatever you do, refuse to stress about it.

Worry never solves anything, and anxiety will just keep you awake longer! Learn instead to rest in His strength, which is always sufficient for every situation.

Redeem those hours in the middle of the night for God's glory by learning to intercede for others, praise God for who He is, or meditate on His Word.

Commit to doing the work – whether that means investing, experimenting, or disciplining yourself – and you will soon see the result of better sleep, better energy, and better health overall.

Sleep is crucial to life . . .

What are YOU willing to do to get more of it?

contact me:

Share your questions, comments, or best sleep suggestions at elizabeth.johnson@dogfuranddandelions.com, or find me on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). I'd love to hear from you!