**Trouble Sleeping? Sleep Tips that can change your health and life!**

Have you ever wondered why you work harder than ever now but deep sound sleep is so elusive? While I’ve always been a night owl, my struggles with sleeplessness started after I had children. I was always listening for someone who might need me in the middle of the night. The condition of anticipatory arousal is common among parents and people like doctors and fireman who are on call. I tried medications, but did not like how I felt the next day and often I did not feel like they helped. As my kids got older, my sleep problems morphed into an overactive mind. It seemed like my mind never shut down. I would worry or have a stupid song playing in my mind. Then there was the dreaded clock that would remind me about how little sleep I was actually getting – giving me yet another thing to worry about! The icing on the cake was arthritis and ruptured disc pain that would keep me awake, limit my favorite sleeping positions or wake me up when I moved.

I seem to have covered many of the spectrum of sleep issues. However, sleep issues are also caused by a variety of medical issues, mental and emotional issues, lifestyle choices, food choices, technology and even medications.

Almost everyone has a “bad” night once in a while. However, when there are more bad nights than good nights, it is time to take a serious look at the variety of things that could be impacting good quality sleep. Good quality sleep is critical for health and well-being. Lack of good quality sleep can impact your immune system, your body’s repair processes, your ability to heal both emotionally and physically, your ability to cope with daily stressors big and small, the way you age, your weight, proper hormone regulation, diabetes, cardiovascular problems, hypertension, mood disorders, safety issues and so much more.

Over the years, I’ve made some great strides in improving my sleep. However, I’m not out of the woods yet as I struggle with waking up around 3 or 4 and having trouble getting back to sleep. Here is what has worked for me as well as what I need to change in my lifestyle.

1. Replace your mattress. I found myself fighting all night to keep from rolling into my husband. If your mattress is relatively new, make sure you are flipping and rotating it on a regular basis to extend the life and minimize the body valleys that get created.
2. Replace your pillow. We often “love” our pillows and keep them way too long.
3. Go natural. Mattresses often are made out of synthetic fibers and treated with chemicals that gas off and can impact your sleep and your health. One mattress topper that uses completely renewable latex and other organic materials is the Kenko Naturest mattress topper by Nikken. [www.nikken.com/trost](http://www.nikken.com/trost)
4. Use technology and address pain. Use magnetic, infrared and negative ion technologies. The technologies in the Naturest sleep system saved my life. I’m now able to sleep on both sides for several hours a night without pain from my arthritis. I’m also getting into a deep sleep and finally dreaming again. Visit <http://www1.nikken.com/sleepcenter/> for details on how all the technologies work together. With the ruptured disc pain and sciatic nerve pain, the Biaxial Power Mag has been indispensible. It runs on a 30 minute cycle and allows me to get back to sleep.
5. Keep a dark room. Take extra steps to block out all the light coming into the bedroom or generated in the bedroom (e.g. clocks). Get a sleep mask if you sleep in later than sunrise.
6. Maintain a comfortable temperature. Make sure you are not going to get too hot or too cold by controlling the environment.
7. Turn clocks so you can’t see the time and stress about staying awake.
8. Get all electronics out of your bedroom – TV, computer, cell phones and cell phone chargers.
9. Replace your cordless phone with a corded phone (still ban your cell phone). The signals and information carrying radio waves disrupt sleep cycles. Do not allow your teen to sleep with a cell phone under their pillow. Many people keep their cell phones next to the bed and check messages as soon as they come in. Remember all cell phone chargers should be in another room. This is your time to sleep. Check out the article on cell phone safety at [www.livinghealthiernow.com](http://www.livinghealthiernow.com) for more information on the impact on your body as well as safety tips.
10. Avoid napping during the day. If you must, do a 15 minute power nap only.
11. Address stress and emotional concerns. Worry is a big sleep robber. Center for Disease Control links 85% of disease to emotions. Check out The Emotion Code technique at http://livinghealthiernow.com/emotion\_code\_20.html. I’ve seen amazing improvements in my cholesterol by using this simple technique.
12. Don’t eat large meals or drink excessive fluids for several hours before going to bed. Waking to go to the bathroom is a problem for many.
13. Lavender – put some essential oils on your pillow or a lavender candle nearby.
14. Consider a variety of supplements ranging from 5-HTP, melatonin, serotonin, l-theanine, calcium and magnesium, and more. A time released melatonin is doing wonders for me. If you are taking medications or are pregnant, always check with your doctor before taking any supplements.

OK, now for the changes that I have been avoiding, but will implement over the next few months.

1. Avoid all technology one hour before bed. This includes the TV, computer, smart phone and cell phone. The light given off from the monitors or screens is a direct light that interferes with your body’s natural cycle. Reading a book is OK, because the light is reflected off the page.
2. Meditate. Carve out 20-40 minutes to do a seated meditation, breathing mediation or a guided meditation from a CD.
3. Use subliminal tapes. Listen to a subliminal tape designed to enhance sleep each night before getting off the computer.
4. Create a definitive stop work time in the evening.
5. Listen to body signals. I often work through my body signaling that it is time to go to bed. I get a second wind and can work longer, but then I can’t sleep.
6. Go to bed earlier. My current bedtime is between 12am and 1am. I’m missing out on the natural circadian rhythms the body goes through. To ensure success, I’ll cut back 30 minutes each week, until I achieve a 10:30pm bedtime. On the other side of the coin, I’ll have to adjust my waking time too. While everyone’s sleep needs are different, too much sleep can be counterproductive for your health too. My goal is 7 to 8 hours a night of quality sleep.
7. Try a variety of natural sleep remedies to help with the transition.
8. Keep pen and paper beside the bed to jot down thoughts and “to do” items. That way, I don’t have to lose sleep trying to remember them.

Definitely take your sleep challenges seriously. There are so many things you can do to improve the quality of your sleep. If you still are not getting results, then see your doctor. Good sleep is critical to your health and how you age. Sweet dreams.