

Let Sleep Come Over You

Heal Your Self !

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1. When mister sandman has lost your address...

... you are not the only one who is troubled by this. Research in Europe, Japan and the US points to the fact that 10 –12% of the entire population suffers from the affliction 'insomnia' (defined as lying awake in bed each night, for at least 2 hours, waiting for sleep to come, or awakening 2 hours early in the morning, followed by a feeling of drowsiness during the day. **Up to 12% of the population suffers from severe sleep disturbances. Much more people complain of a bad sleep.** These percentages have been rising over the years. In 1995, 49% of the adults complained about a difficult sleep, being 15% more than in 1991 [1]. Sleep disturbances clearly have become a major health problem.

Most people with sleeping problems do not seek professional help. This is partly caused by the fact that even today a taboo lies on sleeplessness, as if the sufferer is either mentally ill, has a weak morale or has only a small amount of will power. In addition to this, western medicine in many cases does not have an appropriate answer, neither concerning an etiological explanation, nor concerning a treatment.

People who do not suffer from sleeping problems themselves, can not easily imagine how big the misery is of someone who, night after night and for a long time, has to wait for a sleep that does not come. **Don't! Don't let a difficult sleep spoil your life any longer.** Looking forward to each night with dismay, as well as the drowsiness during the day, are serious problems that can profoundly ruin the life of an individual.

There are many causes for sleepless nights. In many cases, different causes or worsening factors co-exist. A number of these factors (a bad bed or pillow, bad ventilation of the bedroom) can be helped rather easily. **Do! Give enough attention to hygienic measures and use your mental power.** Other factors are behavioural and are likewise easily alleviated although this may

demand some effort or decision power from the individual. Examples are a lack of sleeping ritual, an overdose of stress during the day or eating too much fat just before going to sleep. Furthermore there are a number of medical conditions that can diminish an easy sleep. You can find more information about this in chapter §§.

Tensions, stress, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, pain... In many cases these are factors that heighten each other in self-perpetuating patterns. A lack of sleep lessens for instance the resistance against all forms of psychic stress, as well as many types of physical stress. Vice versa, stress is a major cause of chronic sleeplessness.

In this book, I will expand on the causes and what you can do to alleviate them. The emphasis however lies on an important, if not the most important cause of sleepless nights, namely the way that you yourself look upon your problem. People who resolve other causes of their sleeplessness, in many cases continue to suffer, or have their problem return after some time. This is especially the case when the sleeping problem has nestled itself in your bed for quite some time. You have to relearn to have confidence in your own sleep. You have to learn to surrender yourself to it, as you used to do each night when you were younger. **Do! Let loose some control ... in order to regain control over your life.** You have to learn to loosen some control in order to gain control over your life, not only the eight hours that you sleep, but also during the time between your periods of sleep. The ability for a good sleep is available to everyone. All that needs to happen is mobilizing the power that you temporarily lost.

Sleep is at the same time a very intriguing phenomenon, a very normal phenomenon, something that everybody can talk about and about which in fact even the most renowned experts are often at a loss. **Sleep is something we seemingly know much about but actually understand very little.** We are asleep one third of our lives and yet nobody knows exactly what the function of sleep may be, or, indeed, whether it has a function at all.



2. Little kiddies with big sleeping problems

Children too can sometimes be forgotten by the sandman. In such cases as always, enough attention has to go into investigating possible tensions. However, a medical cause always has to be excluded. The most frequent physical causes of chronic sleeplessness of a youngster are little worms that induce nightly itch around the anus, and an enlargement of nasal polyps. A doctor can easily exclude these conditions.

The busy life of parents with its omni-present stress can quickly spill over to the youngsters. No matter how good you try to conceal your stress and not to act it out on your children, you cannot help communicating tensions and stress verbally and nonverbally. This is highly underestimated by most people. Rest assured that your children psychologically react to you, your partner, your relationship and the whole environment at home, much more than is apparent at first sight. Do! Rest assured that your children can very well sense your degree of stress. Moreover, children can, through their suggestive sensibility, easily become lightning conductors for the problems that adults are not or only half aware of. It is a fact that one is most sensible to verbal suggestion around the age of 7. Before that, the child probably is even more suggestible, be it more to non-verbal suggestion. Children can become ill through this. The famous psychiatrist Donald Laing even declared that schizophrenia, one of the worst psychological afflictions, is frequently caused by family dynamics and that this happens without the parents being aware of it. If this is possible with schizophrenia, it certainly is possible in the case of sleep disturbances. Parents can cause problems to their children through non-verbal suggestions. I recollect from my own practice different cases in which restless nights of the children were clearly caused by the tensions of their parents. It is always a delicate matter then for a physician to attain the best possible solution for the parents *and* the children.

Under no circumstance do I want to inflict any guilt to parents by declaring them unconditionally responsible for all this suggestive communication and for what they may already have inflicted to

their children. The insight that you have more influence than you previously thought, does not mean that suddenly you are/were *guilty* of this influence. Right now there is no room to go further into this. I will do this in other books¹.

The parents are not the only source of the child's restlessness at night. Problems at school, too much neurotic children's movies on TV, the 1001 changes in the own body and emotional life... Children's problems can appear small from the viewpoint of the adult, but they are huge as life to the children themselves. For a long time already, childhood is no more this blissful time without stress or problems. Maybe it still is in other cultures. **Children too have stress and problems that can keep them from sound sleep.** However, in a modern western society the fairytale of a glorious, stressless childhood has long passed away.

Another but related problem comes from the idea of many parents, that their offspring has to remain in the land of dreams for at least a specified number of hours. **Do! Try to know how many hours of sleep your child really needs and do not coerce it into sleeping more than that.** However, if the child has enough with 10 hours and the parents want it to sleep 'around the clock', it is perfectly normal that the child cannot quickly fall to sleep. Every attentive parent sees and feels when his child needs to go to bed. A child that still is very busy at bedtime, is probably not yet ready to sleep and can remain awake during half an hour or longer. You can avoid this by performing an appropriate evening ritual: read a story, talk a little, take time to brush the teeth, etc. If your child isn't tired during the day and cannot go easily to bed, then just let it stay awake a little longer. You will notice the day after what the effect of this will be.

If a baby cries at night, it is always advisable to go and have a look. A baby can cry for lots of reasons: hunger, thirst, cold, a wet diaper, a nightmare, a need for attention, boredom... A little hug, a bit of water, a little talk or lullaby is always OK. Only this way can the child gain the basic trust that help is nearby whenever needed. **A baby with sufficient basic trust is better able to sleep.** If the child has that trust, it will quicker and more profoundly build trust in itself

¹ I have somewhat elaborated on this issue in 'Heal Yourself - Use Autosuggestion'.

also. For many young parents, it is a well-known phenomenon that babies want to play at night. Do not give in to this. Playing is for during the day. If you are consistent in this, your baby will adapt more quickly to a good day-and-night rhythm that is healthy for all who are concerned. Do not try to make the baby tired by playing. The one who will be very tired after a while, is you.

Wrong habits are a frequent cause of 'sleeplessness' for children. If your child starts crying a while after going to sleep, if possible do not take it out of its bed. It is no good either to always stay at the bedside until the child is asleep. These circumstances quickly get associated with a good night rest. It becomes a habit and before you know it, a necessity in order to fall asleep quickly. **Don't! Don't start a fight with you child in order to make it sleep.** To fight this can make life miserable for the child as well as for the parents. If you see that the problem is in fact a problem of wrong suggestivity ('I cannot sleep if this or that does not happen first'), then it is evident that the solution also has to take suggestion into account. What you want, is to communicate to the subconsciousness of the child so that it can quickly fall asleep without aids such as being held again and again by a parent or having a parent at the bedside until sleep finally comes. There is nothing mumbo-jumbo in doing this. **Do! In order to make your child go easily to sleep, use all the suggestion that you can think of.** You can do it for instance in the following way: if the child cries for the first time that night, go to it, stay a few minutes and tell your child to try to fall asleep. Then go away without further discussion. If the child keeps on crying or starts to cry again after a while, wait for 5 minutes (this is very long) and return to the child. Repeat this procedure but always let more time in between with a maximum of 20 minutes. Certainly after a week, perhaps even after a day, the message is received and the child will learn how to fall asleep quickly and easily on its own. And *that* is a knowledge and an art that it will hopefully carry for the rest of its life.

