

Tony Robbins says that cognitive understanding is only the first step of mastery. Unless you are living it, you don't know it.

Given that sentiment, I am highly qualified to be writing about sleep.

A year after my son was born, I stopped sleeping soundly. He was an angel baby, so I can't blame him for my sleep woes. My husband, however, is a restless sleeper with chronic aches from the athletics he loves, so he bore the brunt of my fatigue. We also have a 6'2" family of four above us who walk around late at night battling their own sleep demons. Point being, it began with flawed external conditions and rapidly evolved into a psychological muddle.

Upon mentioning the problem to my mother, she paused and replied, "Yes, I remember that.... I stopped sleeping too in my early 40s." I laughed out loud, definitely the family gene lottery winner. So aside from the external factors, now there was DNA component?

Shortly after that conversation, I went to the doctor, convinced after some google research that I was in the throes of early perimenopause. Dr. Carlon called me a week later with the blood work results, "You are nowhere near perimenopause, all your hormones are perfectly balanced. Here is the number of a sleep doctor."

After meeting with Dr. Ana Krieger, a New York-Presbyterian sleep specialist, I walked away with this list:

- The room should be as dark as possible and below 70 degrees- 68 degrees is the ideal temperature. (check)
- No caffeine after noon, early, light dinner including complex carbs (think grains), and cut off your water supply 90 mins before bedtime (check)
- Epsom salt baths (never did this)
- Avoid screens an hour before bedtime, includes TV thirty minutes out (occasionally)
- Read before bedtime (sometimes)
- A sound machine (check)

The brand I prefer- Marpac Dohm white noise sound machine- I currently have two in my room.

https://www.amazon.com/Dohm-DS-Natural-Machine-Lightweight-Sleeping/dp/B0792S7NRY/ref=mp_s_a_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1524753834&sr=8-1-spons&pi=AC_SX236_SY340_QL65&keywords=marpac+sound+machine&psc=1

- Earplugs if helpful and not bothersome. (check)

Most earplugs make my ear canals sore, but I love these- Mack's Snoozers Silicone putty earplugs

https://www.amazon.com/Macks-Snoozers-Silicone-Putty-Earplugs/dp/B003ATFEUY/ref=redir_mobile_desktop?encoding=UTF8&qid=1524753886&ref=mp_s_a_1_2_a_it&sr=8&th=12&keywords=mac+k+snoozer+ear+plugs&dpPl=1&dpID=51z-rbtv4xL&ref=plSrch

- berries and a little dark chocolate a few hours before bed or a half a teaspoon of raw honey (check)

I implemented almost every item on this list, and the results were minimal and short-lived. The rub with sleep issues and fatigue are the more tired you become, the more frazzled your nerves and the less coping skills you have to approach the matter reasonably. Insomnia is a word used to describe a negative psychological affiliation with sleep. Living into any story is dangerous, and I spent two years walking around telling people that I had insomnia. The more I spoke about my insomnia, the worse it became- now a “thing” I had to contend with daily.

I started taking over the counter sleep aids, and I found Bayer PM caused the least amount of morning brain fog. Then it was discontinued. My mother sent me a bottle of something from Costco that made me feel like a blow dart hit me- the next morning.

Then a friend told me about this tea:

Doc Parsley’s Sleep Remedy:

<http://www.docparsley.com/shop/>

It says on the box to drink 8oz thirty minutes before bedtime, but since that conflicted with the ninety-minute rule, I created my preparation directions. Using only 3oz of water, I drink the delicious tea an hour before bedtime. It works well, and you feel clear the next day.

Daniel sourced another tea that he now prefers called:

Four Sigmatic:

https://us.foursigmatic.com/collections/mushroom-beverages?gclid=Cj0KCQjw8YXXBRDXARIsAMzsQuVvaCxCNCcXJMjGqTTL0fafQB30VgQSilcT25DyvgygoiD44hatOt8aAiO-EALw_wcB

Meditation has made the most significant difference in my relationship with sleep. After being trained in Transcendental Meditation a year and a half ago, I developed a regular practice. My anxiety around sleep lessened and the quality of my sleep improved. Even after a night of less than ideal rest, meditation helps keep me awake and present throughout the day.

During periods of excess stress, when my thoughts are unusually loud, I listen to an Audible book with a timer instead of the voice that threatens me with another sleepless night.

It's still a work in progress and I will report back with any new developments.