

Foreword

It is unavoidable: every living creature needs sleep. Insomnia refers to the inability to get enough sleep to feel rested the next day. It can be described several ways: acute or chronic, trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or waking too early. Some people have more than one form of insomnia, and overall it affects one third of adults at some point during a year. Insomnia can be a disorder in its own right, one which doctors and scientists know little about, but often it is a symptom of some other medical or psychological condition. In order for any treatment of insomnia to be effective, these other conditions must be evaluated and either ruled out or treated.

Insomnia can be an exasperating condition for both sufferers and those helping with treatment. Sleeping pills are often effective but are not the right choice for many, and most patients do not want to be on medicines for a long time. Habit changes (e.g., sleep hygiene, stimulus control, sleep restriction) can be very effective, but take patience, repetition, and, for many, are frustratingly difficult. Cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBTI) addresses some of the unpleasant thoughts about getting a good night's sleep that can aggravate insomnia.

In this book, *Restful Insomnia*, Sondra Kornblatt describes her journey not to cure but to manage her insomnia. She outlines the basic medical issues that can impact sleep and reviews the traditional approaches to treating insomnia. The central focus then emerges as she explores, often with step-by-step instructions, the details of her program of resting with insomnia. While many of her suggestions overlap with the traditional insomnia recommendations, she goes further to combine attention to the mind, the body, and the spirit to achieve rest. Her ability to clearly explain how to incorporate the techniques into one's sleep habits is what sets this book apart.

Ultimately, once medical conditions are excluded, a sleep specialist's goal is to help an insomnia sufferer function well during the day and not feel stressed about the sleep or lack of it at night. Sondra's program is a valuable addition to the approaches that I review with patients. Her book can help those with frequent insomnia explore different techniques at their own pace and focus on the ones that seem most beneficial. Everyone deserves a peaceful night; *Restful Insomnia* is one tool that will help many achieve it.

—Teresa E. Jacobs, MD
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Introduction: An Endarkened Insomniac Sees the Light

*When I woke up this morning my girlfriend asked me,
“Did you sleep well?” I said, “No, I made a few mistakes.”*

—Steven Wright, comedian

I love to sleep.

I love to stretch out on smooth sheets, read by a dimmed lamp, and nestle into a soft pillow. Activity is left behind as I ride night dreams in a dark room and quiet house. I love waking to a new day—possibility, promise, and release from yesterday's irritations.

No surprise, then, that I hated insomnia—especially when chronic insomnia gripped me several years ago. I hated the rumpled sheets, flattened pillow, achy neck, and watching the clock in those hazy, dark hours between two and five. I hated rising in the morning with an empty tank—irritable and dreading the busy day, longing to close my eyes and rest.

Sure, I loved sleep, but did it love me? Some nights it did. But really, it was a fickle lover that promised bliss for eight hours—and then ran off.

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Restful Insomnia by Sondra Kornblatt is available wherever books are sold or directly from the publisher at 1-800-423-7087 or www.redwheelweiser.com.

I tried to seduce sleep. Pills had side effects: I was groggy, dependent, and duller during the day—and that didn't count the side effects of newer pills such as "sleepdriving" at night. Instead, I tried cures from books, Internet sites, acupuncturists, friends, and doctors. If they worked at all, it was just for a night or two. (However, various techniques work for some Restful Insomnia clients of mine. After developing the program, I began in 2003 to teach and coach clients in these techniques.) For me, all they did was give insomnia a slightly different twist:

- A snack or a glass of wine before bed (weight-gain insomnia)
- No food or wine after 8 p.m. (weight-loss insomnia)
- Sleepytime tea (wake-up-to-pee insomnia)
- Calcium, magnesium, melatonin, and L-tryptophan (expensive urine insomnia)
- Sleep "hygiene": lights-out at eleven, no napping, and waking at seven (exhausted insomnia)
- New pillow and mattress (in-debt insomnia)
- Exercise, warm baths, and relaxation exercises (healthy insomnia)
- Washing dishes, answering e-mail, and folding clothes (efficient and more exhausting insomnia)
- Yoga handstands, journal entries of irritations, banging my head against the headboard (*Help me!* insomnia)

It turns out the failed insomnia cures were gifts in disguise.

During those long, lonely nights, I uncovered riches in the dark—how to befriend myself at night, how to mimic the benefits of sleep, and how to create a deep rest that renewed me. I shared these methods with other insomniacs who learned to uncover their own riches and rest in the dark.

In this book, I'm excited to share my Restful Insomnia program with you, one of the seventy million Americans who battle insomnia each night. This book covers how you can:

- Create restful waking hours
- Calm the restless mind
- Connect with your body to release stress
- Mimic the benefits of sleep—and greet the morning refreshed

You'll learn the five steps of the Restful Insomnia program along with specific ways to create a comforting space, get in tune with dusk at night, let go of relentless thoughts, reduce the charge of emotions, and connect to a larger perspective on problems and the joy of life.

Let's start with how I went from hating insomnia to . . . OK, not loving it, but valuing it, and accepting the gifts that can help everyone's nights.

Grieving and Accepting Insomnia

Before I began accepting the gifts, I suffered.

During my bout of chronic insomnia, I was cranky and fuzzy in the morning, a sour space cadet during the day, and depressed in the evening because that fickle lover Sleep would probably not show. Nights were spirals of tension when I longed for sleep. Insomniac life was like driving with a piston missing—chugging and groaning through days and nights.

I longed for sleep so much, I grieved not having it. In fact, I went through the typical five stages of grief.

Denial: "Lots of people do OK on a couple hours of sleep. I'm *fine!*"

Anger: "Why is that light red? Who moved my Kleenex box? Nobody cares about me."

Bargaining: "Maybe if I mop the kitchen floor, I'll be able to sleep."

Depression: "I'll never sleep. I'll never be able to work, think, or get anything done. Life is hopeless."

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Acceptance: “OK, here’s insomnia. How can I learn to make the best of it?”

Acceptance came (and still comes) in small “aha” moments. It allowed me to look at sleeplessness in a new way, to uncover what *really* happened at night.

Acceptance

Acceptance of insomnia first came during the day.

I was walking with a friend and whining about being tired, not being able to sleep, and needing a couple of hours to myself—away from the kids, work, and errands. As I grumbled, a voice in my head whispered, “Three a.m.” I realized I could have my hours to myself—when I couldn’t sleep. While I wanted that time during the day, twelve hours earlier (What else was I doing in those early hours?), I was too exhausted to be productive, and moaning didn’t make me happy—nor make me feel rested. So the next few nights at 3 a.m., I pretended I was having a few dark hours alone during the day: I visualized my success, wrote in my journal, and practiced talking gently to myself.

That was the beginning of exploring insomnia in a new way—with acceptance.

Instead of *thinking* about insomnia (and fixing it), I felt it. Which meant I experienced my body and how the mind, emotions, body habits, environment, and the night itself affected my ability to sleep. I realized that my Conscious Mind (my thinking, planning, fixing mind) kept me awake at night, and that my Unconscious Mind (responsible for body connection, intuition, dreaminess) led me to rest.

When I stopped fighting insomnia and focused on my Unconscious Mind, I developed ways to soothe my body, mind, emotions, and environment. And those techniques, or variations on them, worked night after night.

Some nights, I rested deeply. Some nights, I fell asleep. Either way, I was happy to find that insomnia was no longer a big problem. I discovered that I was mimicking the benefits of sleep and greeting the mornings refreshed, with more productive days.

The Five Steps of Restful Insomnia

I talked with others about Restful Insomnia and came across many insomniacs tired of hating sleepless nights. I started teaching them my techniques in classes and one-on-one, and my clients loved it. Some changed their insomnia just by looking at sleeplessness in a new way. (*Hey I can relax if I don’t have to make myself sleep!*) However, most of us need a plan when we’re lost in insomniac tension. After all, we’ve spent many nights—even decades—in the sleepless struggle.

Five steps organize the Restful Insomnia techniques that help you enjoy your nights:

1. Create a soothing night environment
2. Befriend the body
3. Diminish the thinking mind
4. Release the hold of emotions
5. Tap into the natural or spiritual self.

Each step includes specific methods you can use tonight to change your body, mind, emotions, and spirit when you can’t sleep. Each chapter relates to the five steps, after introducing the basic Restful Insomnia concepts, in this way:

1. Create a soothing night environment (*Creating a Night Nest; Evening Rituals*)
2. Befriend the body (*Getting into Your Body; Night Yoga; A New Relationship with Pain and Discomfort*)
3. Diminish the thinking mind (*Change Your Mind; Resting with Meditation*)
4. Release the hold of emotions (*Emotions and Touch; Wisdom Writing*)
5. Tap into the natural or spiritual self (*Finding Your Spiritual Center; Grounding; Positive Focus*)

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The book ends with a chapter on *Taking Restful Insomnia Insights into Sleep and the Day*.

Here's a summary of how the steps work:

To *create a soothing night environment*, you can use Evening Rituals to welcome the dark, and gather a Night Nest stash; to *befriend the body*, you can focus on the wisdom of body sensations or release tension with Night Yoga; you can *diminish the thinking mind* by understanding how the Conscious Mind keeps you awake and how the Unconscious Mind helps you rest; you can *release the hold of emotions* by using acupressure tapping techniques and Wisdom Writing; and you can *tap into the natural or spiritual self* through visualization, being aware of body sensation, and meditation.

The five-step path brings you back to a calm state at night.

Once you're aware of the ways to relax, you can choose the best Restful Insomnia techniques for you. These techniques may change from night to night and season to season.

Although I no longer have the same chronic insomnia of four to five nights a week, I still have plenty of sleepless hours—in the middle of the night or when I try to fall asleep. Even now, when sleeplessness sneaks back after a few good nights of sleep, I might have moments of insomnia resentment. (*You again? I didn't miss you.*) Then I remember Restful Insomnia and practice my current favorite techniques. Right now they include rolling my eyes down (see chapter 6, "Getting into Your Body") and pausing at the edge of each inhale and exhale (see chapter 10, "Resting with Meditation"). Or I go back to the foundation of the five-step program: darken the environment, notice the body, tap acupressure points to soothe emotions, discharge problems with Wisdom Writing, and connect to the spiritual self.

I've gotten many gifts from insomnia: The first was learning how to accept sleeplessness as part of life and using it to rest and find renewal. Then I found gifts within Restful Insomnia, from insights about myself to healing visualizations and listening to my husband talk in his sleep. None of these gifts would I return, even if I had a receipt.

Sleep and Renewal

I still love to sleep, letting my mind just turn off.

But now I like insomnia, too. I experience my body, learn that my emotions aren't the whole truth, and touch into deeper wisdom. I connect with the essence of night's rejuvenation.

During the day, I take the perspectives I uncover during Restful Insomnia to keep me focused, relaxed, creative, and connected to a larger perspective on life, even as I hurry on errands or make dinner.

The journey of insomnia led me to new roads I wouldn't change. Let me show you how you can befriend the night—and your life.

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