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HYPNOSIS FOR MOVING THROUGH
ILLNESS
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OPTIMAL SLEEP

Studies show that getting a sufficient amount of restful sleep is difficult for people who *aren't* ill. And stress is one reason for that. It makes sense, then, that people experiencing a major illness and the stress related to it are likely to have difficulties with sleeping.

First, let's be clear that there are many kinds of sleep difficulties and disorders. From the inability to fall asleep to the inability to stay asleep to sleepwalking to narcolepsy to sleep apnea (abruptly stopping breathing while sleeping) to bed wetting, whatever the type of problem, the result is exhaustion and a decreased ability to function while awake. Of course, mood is affected as well. And as we now know, general health and well-being is largely contingent upon getting enough and the right kind of sleep.

Studies have shown that inadequate sleep is also related to cardiovascular disease. That makes sense, as sleep deficit is stressful, and stress is a major risk factor for heart attacks and strokes. Sleep deficit also leads to increased inflammation, which is another risk factor for heart disease, cancer, stroke, and other diseases. Problems with sleep are even linked to obesity (Patel & Hu, 2008), and both long- and short-sleep duration have been linked to type 2 diabetes (Yaggi, Araujo, & McKinlay, 2006).

The irony about anxiety and sleep is that you need to control your anxiety in order to sleep well, but that often creates another level of anxiety—anxiety over the anxiety that might be preventing you from sleeping well. The more you think about how you might not sleep, the less you'll probably sleep. And the anxiety that you create about lack of sleep will trigger the release of adrenaline, leaving you wide-awake. Clearly, relaxation is the key. If your body and mind aren't relaxed, restful sleep will not come. If your mind is racing with thoughts of the day you just had and the one that is to come, not to mention every day before and after these two days, sleep will not come. If you're thinking about every big, bad thing that might happen, perseverating over minutiae, or replaying conversations over and over in your head, sleep will not come.

Fortunately, the greatest, documented benefit of hypnosis is the ability to relax the mind and body and induce sleep. Every CD I have available to the public—all 200 of them—is based on complete relaxation and putting the brain into a Theta state, where creativity, tranquility, and profound learning and healing live. When in this Theta state, you are not yet asleep, though if it is suggested that you fall into a deep restful sleep, and that is what you want, you will fall into a deep restful sleep. In fact, most of my patients use my CDs to fall asleep every night.

Due to my personal experience, the experience of my clients, and the experience of the patients I worked with at the Sari Center, I have no problem saying that if your difficulty has to do with falling asleep, you've come to the right place. If there's one thing hypnosis is consistently good at, it's helping people fall asleep. Both acute and chronic insomnia respond to hypnosis (Ng & Lee, 2008).

Now, some people have a physical problem that is preventing them from sleeping or staying asleep or breathing properly when they sleep. I always recommend asking your doctor if there could be anything standing in the way of you and restful sleep. Keep in mind, though, that your doctor might not be current on just how effective hypnosis can be for treating sleep disorders of all kinds, including sleep apnea. There has been research attesting to the benefits of hypnotherapy for resolving sleep disturbances (Graci & Hardie, 2005), and I encourage everyone suffering the deleterious effects of exhaustion due to lack of restful sleep to experience hypnosis for three weeks, as described at the end of this chapter. I can't make any guarantees, but I can say that I've seen self-hypnosis work over and over again for over a decade.

Conscious Level Tips for Optimal Sleep

Here are some basic tips that everyone can benefit from when it comes to creating the best conditions and environment for optimal sleep.

- **Stick to a sleep schedule.** Schedules are important for your circadian rhythm. Go to bed the same time each evening, including weekends, and wake at the same time each day. This helps your mind and body to anticipate the rest and gear down for it regularly, so sleep has a better chance of becoming a habit.
- **Sleep in a dark, quiet, cool room.** Sunlight on your face during the day is advantageous (and we're not talking about tanning), but at night, the darker your room is, the better. As for noise, if outside noise is impossible to eliminate, use some kind of white noise or even earplugs. And when it comes to room temperature, 65 degrees, which is definitely not warm for most people, is the optimal temperature.
- **Use naps judiciously.** Napping during the day to make up for lost sleep can be a good idea if the nap is before 3pm and for under an hour. But more than that, or later than that, can throw off the sleep schedule you're trying to establish and create the conditions for insomnia.
- **Gear down before bedtime.** The hour or two prior to bedtime isn't the time for an intense workout. Or even an intense family discussion. Or a huge meal. Gearing down means respecting the transition to bedtime and downshifting your activities, your discussions, and the energy you expend. Make it easy to be completely relaxed by bedtime. Not exhausted mentally and physically, but relaxed.
- **Limit caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine.** Caffeinated beverages are for the morning hours and maybe into lunch. And though drinking alcohol in the evening usually makes you feel sleepy, you're more likely to not sleep well, get up once or twice, and wake up feeling less rested. Alcohol messes with your sleep architecture in general, and though you might enjoy it, if

you're having difficult getting a good night's rest, eliminating alcohol is wise. As for nicotine, I only mention it to remind you that it's a stimulant and will interfere with your sleep. I don't recommend anyone use nicotine, ever.

- **Exercise regularly.** Brisk, daily activity for 30 minutes is good for your mind and body and helps you sleep more deeply. It also makes you more physically tired by the end of the day, which will help you relax, and relaxation leads to sleep.
- **Give your brain a rest.** Part of downshifting is clearing your head of the thoughts of the day, the worries about tomorrow, and even the brainstorming about how to solve problems. If your brain is anything like mine, that's a difficult request. Meditation helps the busy mind tremendously, as does self-hypnosis, which promotes the relaxation and de-stressing.

What I've learned...

What I've learned in my practice is that insomnia can actually be a habit that a person has created. And as you now know, where there's one habit, it can be replaced with a different one. Though I mention all of the ways you can help create an environment for optimal sleep on the conscious level, when I'm working with someone on the subconscious level, I don't fight whatever might be keeping them awake in their sleeping environment. If there are loud sounds, strong smells, or the temperature in the room isn't right, I use those seemingly negative things to help the person go deeper and deeper into a restful sleep.

For example, I have a dozen or so clients who live at least part of the year in Manhattan. When they say The City Never Sleeps, what they're really saying is that it's never quiet in Manhattan. When I hypnotize these clients, I tell them that each time they hear sirens, trucks, taxis, and people hollering, they relax even more. And I do the same thing with people who live near railroad tracks. They are programmed to relax each time they begin to hear the train approaching. No matter what lights or sounds surround you when you sleep, you can use them to improve your sleep.

Optimal Sleep

Instructions:

1. Read each night, before retiring, for 21 nights. Read aloud, with feeling, using the word you chose earlier to replace the longer version of Alpha Conditioning.
2. Proceed immediately to the script for Optimal Sleep.

S	M	T	W	TH	F	Sat

From this moment on, each and every time I desire to attain the deep state of total relaxation, I am instantly and fully relaxed, as I am now drifting into the Alpha state of consciousness. The moment I think my chosen word,___, Alpha occurs. This word has an effect only when I use it and only under the proper circumstances. Each and every time I do use it I am fully prepared to receive positive, beneficial, and constructive suggestions, impressing each one deeper into the storage and memory facility of my brain.

From this moment on,___triggers deep relaxation of my mind and body. I feel Alpha occur. I feel wonderful. I feel comfortable. I am totally receptive and responsive to my own creative ideas and suggestions. I am bathed in a glow of quietness, peace, and serenity. My chosen word works only when I deliberately use it for deep relaxation to attain Alpha consciousness. Its use in regular conversation has no effect on me whatsoever. From this moment on, each and every time I desire the deep state of total relaxation, I am instantly and fully relaxed upon saying_. Because my subconscious must follow my command, each and every time I desire total relaxation, I am instantly and fully relaxed when I think my chosen word_____. I feel a deep sense of gratification as this word programming becomes a reality. Feeling wonderful, generous, alive, and eager to achieve optimal sleep.

OPTIMAL SLEEP

My body requires a certain amount of sleep to rejuvenate and repair itself. Adequate rest and relaxation are imperative to my good health – in all stages of my life. I know that sleep is a natural human body function. I appreciate the fact that sleep is a natural and normal part of my life. Since the moment in time that I was born, my body has appreciated the countless wonderful benefits it derives from having a good night's sleep.

As I relax deeper, I release every unhappy experience of the past . . . and everything connected with each of those experiences . . . I find it easy to let go of them. I am a part of life . . . as we all are . . . and we all move, live, and think as we have the right to . . . Life goes on and so do I .

. . growing rich in experience and in capacity to achieve. The positive experiences in my life supply me with a directness to meet the challenges of my life. All I must do is use the amazing power of my subconscious mind to disengage myself from every negative . . . destructive . . . and harmful impression that a poor night's sleep has ever left upon me. Those bad impressions fade . . . fade . . . fade . . . out of my life forever.

I now fully release my past negative experiences and all their effects upon me. I accept myself. I am a healthy and balanced individual. I am a valuable and talented human being. I am always aware of my innate worth. Every movement . . . every gesture . . . and every word of mine preserves my unique stamp on life. I know that in order for me to

function up to my highest potential, I must obtain a restful night's sleep. I deserve to relax and achieve a good night's sleep. I love myself and accept myself. I am grateful for this new level of understanding. This acceptance releases me from any and all negative self-like . . . I am now free to change that which needs to be changed. I am now free to improve that which needs to be improved.

The reason I am listening to this is that I want to sleep well. I have made a decision to take back control of this part of my life that has been out of control for too long. I have decided to gain control through thorough self-awareness and self-control. That's right.

I am calm and relaxed every time I wish to fall asleep. Good. I remember . . . I am calm . . . and relaxed . . . each and every time I wish to fall asleep. That's right. I am calm and relaxed each and every time I wish to fall asleep.

I know that after my body has finished absorbing all the benefits from a good night's sleep, I awaken feeling refreshed and invigorated. I awaken from my restful sleep feeling alive and free. I awaken with a positive and exhilarating zest for the day ahead of me. I awaken with a clear mind, and a healthy and recharged body . . . ready and able to conquer the tasks before me.

Now I take a moment and see how I feel . . . how I am feeling this second. I take a moment to become aware of how relaxed I am feeling. I would like to notice the calming sensation that I have been enjoying. Notice how wonderful it is and how good I feel! I realize and accept the fact that these relaxed sensations are sensations that I have created for myself. No one else can ever make me relax like I can.

I will, from this moment on, be more calm and relaxed in any situation that I need to be more relaxed in. For example, relaxing to fall asleep. I am in control of my own life. I will be more relaxed any time I feel that my life is getting out of control. All I have to do is count backwards from 10 down to 1.

Ok, now I am going to try it . . .

10. Relax . . . I take a deep breath and hold that breath for a moment. Good.

9. I exhale that deep breath out very, very slowly. I feel my entire body relaxing even deeper.

8. Good! Now, I want to relax even deeper into an even more restful and wonderful state of being.

7. That was great! I take another deep breath and hold it for just a moment.

6. Good, now I exhale that breath and just simply relax all my face muscles. My tongue should be resting comfortably in my mouth. I unclench my jaw if it is clenched.

5. Wonderful, peaceful thoughts go through my mind.

4. I am calm and relaxed.

3. I feel wonderful and restful. I am going to sleep so very well.

2. Peacefully relaxed.

1. *I am relaxed . . . calm . . . and at ease.*

Good . . . very good. Relax . . . relax. I have just learned how to relax. I can use this new learned behavior in any way that will work the very best for me. This is an ability that I have and can use from this moment on. There will be times when I will be surprised by how completely I am able to let go and relax. Just as sure . . . just as certain . . . just as easily as I have relaxed here today . . . I will be able to relax each and every day. So now, if I am in a situation where my self-control or willpower is getting out of my control, I have the tools to relax myself . . . and I relax myself. I become relaxed . . . and I regain the power to sleep well always.

Any natural sounds like snoring help me to drift, dream, and float into a peaceful and wonderful relaxed state of rest and sleep. I stay relaxed and sleep pleasantly through the night, or through my naptime. Any useless tension is released immediately as I rest contently. Should I need to awaken for an emergency before the time that my sleeping time ends, I awaken immediately, effectively deal with the emergency, and then I return to a restful and relaxing state of sleep.

Absent any sickness or emergency, my body temperature does not rise above my normal resting rate. My body temperature remains steady and stable throughout my sleep so that I am not woken up unnecessarily due to a rise or fall in my body temperature.

Every time I see my bed or place where I wish to sleep, and I say the word "sleep" to myself, my subconscious mind automatically takes over . . . and automatically allows me to fall safely and peacefully into a very restful, relaxed state of sleep.

My subconscious mind follows all of the positive suggestions that I listened to in this session. Each and every time I listen to this session, the suggestions I hear automatically double and reinforce in my subconscious mind. Every time I think, I say the word "sleep" and I go naturally to sleep. Sleep . . . sleep . . . sleep.

I am now going to drift off into a normal, natural sleep. When I awaken, I will feel fully rested, calm, and at peace with myself, the world, and those around me.