

## To Sleep, Perchance to Dream....

### 1. Why sleep?

So many theories... I've been listening to podcasts and reading up and mostly struck by the sheer number of theories – all, by the way, fascinating but all claiming to have “the answer”. I did learn a few things. When you fall asleep your brain is “washed” of thoughts of the day – but not all thoughts. Whatever you spent the most focussed time on will stay. That is how they discovered that certain ideas are implanted into the brain during the day and will stay with you and you will perhaps solve the question you had. This is referred to as Brain Processing and Memory Consolidation. This explains why some of us remember solutions to problems when we wake up. I relax at times by building things. Until I am able to “see” something it will remain as a problem, sometimes for weeks. However, at some point I will dream the solution and wake up and build it. This also explains why talk therapy can work. If you are working on an issue with your therapist, the work will continue while you sleep which is a very cheap form of therapy itself! Obviously not everyone does this – just as some of us are more visual or more audial or more kinetic, so our problems will become solved in different ways – that may utilize our dream time maybe not. We do know that there are genes that get turned on only during sleep for restoration. Well rested people tend to have creative and novel ideas three times more frequently than others.

2. **What is well rested?** The highest incidence of stress that is sleep deprivation occurs among shift workers whose circadian rhythms are disrupted. Circadian rhythms are physical, mental and behavioral changes that follow a roughly 24-hour cycle, responding primarily to light and darkness in an organism's environment. They are found in most living things, including animals, plants and many tiny microbes. The study of circadian rhythms is called chronobiology. Incidentally, most animals, to include ducks and dolphins sleep with only one half of their brains... assumedly because of danger. The circadian rhythm dips and rises at different times of the day, so adults' strongest sleep drive generally occurs between 2:00-4:00 am and in the afternoon between 1:00-3:00 pm, although there is some variation depending on whether you are a “morning person” or “evening person.” There is no data that “early to sleep and early to rise makes one healthy wealthy & wise.” However, the early bird does still get the worm... so perhaps fed without the other attributes? 100,000 car accidents per year are caused from falling asleep at the wheel. Teenagers have a circadian rhythm different than adults so they are wired to stay up later... and of course must rise early for school. Problematic for sure. Average for sleep was 8 hours/night in the 50's, now about 6 ½ hours with about 7 hours for most people being the target goal.
3. **Restoration?** Chinese medicine goes beyond the deep sleep theory to quantify when each organ experiences restoration – please see the handout. Organ issues can sometimes be identified by the time that someone wakes up in the middle of the night.
4. **When?** Sleep is disrupted in basically three ways. a. falling asleep. b. waking in the middle of the night. c. waking too early. Each of these seems to need different herbal remedies. Melatonin is commonly used for difficulty falling asleep. Many people use cannabis to get back to sleep when they wake in the night. Waking up too early is less defined and seems to be often from worry or depression and so working on stress and the nervous system is essential.

## Sleep Remedies

“There are many herbs with reputations as being effective sleep remedies, but there are no legal plants that will put a person out! The key to successful treatment of insomnia is to find the cause and deal with it. This may be anything in the realm of human life, from deep grief to constipation. Psychological issues often need attention, but then so health problems causing pain or discomfort. Dietary indiscretions must be identified, as must environmental factors (e.g. freeway noise or a snoring spouse). Insomnia can push the practitioners diagnostic skills to the limit, making the allopaths free and easy prescribing of benzodiazepine sleeping medications at least understandable!” - David Hoffman

The role of **Cannabis** in sleep: Because cannabinoids act in such a wide range, they can be very helpful in sleep. “Few plants have a greater array of folk medicine uses: alcohol withdrawal, anthrax, asthma, blood poisoning, bronchitis, burns, catarrh, childbirth, convulsions, coughs, cystitis, delirium, depression, diarrhea, dysentery, dysmenorrhea, epilepsy, fever, gonorrhoea, gout, inflammation, insomnia, jaundice, lockjaw, malaria, mania, menorrhagia, migraine, morphine withdrawal, neuralgia, palsy, rheumatism, scalds, snakebite, swellings, tetany, toothache, uterine prolapse, and whooping cough.” (James Duke, 1983). There are two species of Cannabis, Sativa and Indica. **Indica** is well known for its sedative effects which some prefer for night time use. **Indica** possesses a more calming, soothing, and numbing experience. Generally, Indica is higher in Cannabinoids other than THC which is the psychoactive component. The Cannabinoid CBN is most often cited as the greatest sleep aid, found in Indicas. Blueberry Kush is said to be a good Indica and all those bred for high CBD like ACDC and Harlequin.

### Categories of Herbal Action

**Hypnotics** are strong nervine relaxants but will not knock you out.

**Nervine Relaxants** ease the tensions that often produce sleeplessness.

**Anti-spasmodics** address any somatic muscular tightness that might be involved. **Nervine Tonics** are indicated if there is any suspicion that the insomnia is associated with nervous exhaustion (as it often is).

**Adaptogens** There is one adaptogen that is essential and that is Ashwaganda (*Withania somnifera*). Every night before bed.

### Support your Organ Systems

**Circulatory system:** Hawthorn, Motherwort, Ginkgo, Gotu Kola.

**Respiratory system:** Wild Lettuce eases irritable coughs and is also a nervine. I like Mullein, Elecampane, Yarrow and a little bit of Lobelia.

**Digestive system:** Old Reliable Chamomile, Vervain, Hops and Valerian – generally your bitters.

**Urinary system:** my favorite is corn silk infusion which is safe and clearing. You can also use any of the hypnotics such as Californian Poppy, Hops, Wild Lettuce, Passion Flower, or Valerian.

**Reproductive system:** Homeopathic Pulsatilla and Black Cohosh.

**Muscles and skeleton:** Valerian, Kava Kava and Black Cohosh can be important here as well as the hypnotics.

**Nervous system:** All these remedies work on the nervous system.

### Basics

**Gentle Sleep Aid:** Chamomile, Linden, Red Clover

**More Convincing Sleep Aid:** Mugwort, Motherwort, Skullcap, Vervain

**Strong Sleep Aid:** Californian Poppy, Hops, Wild Lettuce, Passion Flower, Valerian

### **Menopausal Sleep Disruption Remedy**

Equal Parts: Passion Flower, Valerian, Motherwort

### **Indigestion Sleep Disruption Remedies**

Chamomile Infusion, Homeopathic Nux Vomica, bitters in general

### **Headaches & Hypertension Disruption Remedies**

Wood Betony is my tincture of choice here; ½ dropper as needed. Passion Flower will calm a racing mind better than anything. Linden as a soothing infusion.

### **Insomnia associated with depression:** No hops

St. Johns Wort and Tulsi are both effective gentle mood elevators.

### **General Sleep Disruption Remedy**

Equal parts Cannabis Indica from dried buds macerated in organic grape alcohol for two months, Passionflower, and either Hops (if tense) or California Poppy if pain related.

Do Bees Sleep: Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEU38p4u7tY>

Do Hummingbirds Sleep? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL9W0RBKSSE>

### **Generalities:**

Yes, dark dark room, no electricity. Same bedtime every night. No noise. Good luck!

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