

# What You Need to Know About Sleep

(Easy steps to get a better rest... and more of it.)

## For GOOD SLEEP - *Timing is Everything:*

Here are some do's and don'ts:

- **Take naps (but not too long).** Set a timer for 20 minutes.
- **Turn off electronics several hours before bed.** These devices emit a blue light that suppresses melatonin, an important sleep-inducing hormone.
- **Caffeine** Every body is different; we change with our age & stress levels. Stop drinking coffee, and other stealthy caffeinated beverages after lunch. Experiment.
- **Make a schedule for sleep & exercise in nature (if possible).** Observe & enjoy the beauty of nature. Walk. Be moderate. Be consistent. Seek the support of your family and friends to help you keep the schedule. *Ask for help and give it when you can.*
- **Drink only a little & not at bedtime.** Limit alcohol to three hours before bedtime and imbibe moderately (one drink for women and two for men, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).
- **Timing of RX** *WHEN* you take your prescriptions could be disrupting your good night's sleep. Talk to your doctor about the timing of your meds.
- **Hormonal insomnia** Hormones are important regulators for many healthy body functions – not just sex. Insomnia is common with menopause. Seek treatment.



Garden of Change

BIO | PSYCHO | SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO CAREGIVER SUPPORT

- **Make Calming Habits** – If prayer is about talking to our Higher Power, then meditation is listening; it's a conversation with the holy and the higher. Drink a calming herbal tea of your choice at night. **Take a hot, epsom salt bath** before sleep to help you relax. **Create a good sleeping environment.** Get a new bed. Paint walls with calming colors. Use sleep sounds. **Get the right sunlight exposure during the day:** get outside in natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes each day. **Don't lie in bed awake:** if more than 20 minutes, get up and do some relaxing activity until you feel sleepy.

See what options work for you. Good sleep habits can be learned and re-learned as you & your body change.

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**“Sleep.** It's as elusive as leprechaun gold, and twice as valuable. The number of health conditions linked to poor or inadequate sleep is almost endless, with obesity, diabetes and heart disease topping the list. “

- Jessica Migala, *Can't Sleep? Here Are 11 Surprising Causes*, AARP, March 8, 2019  
<https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2019/have-trouble-sleeping.html>

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### **They forgot caregiving...Evidence shows that most caregivers are ill-prepared for their role.**

**Most provide care with little or no support, yet more than one-third of caregivers continue to provide intense care to others while suffering from poor health themselves. Studies have shown that an influential factor in a caregiver's decision to place an impaired relative in a long-term care facility is the family caregiver's own physical health.**

**A substantial body of research shows that family members who provide care to individuals with chronic or disabling conditions are themselves at risk. Emotional, mental, and physical health problems arise from complex caregiving situations and the strains of caring for frail or disabled relatives.**

**- A Population at Risk, Family Caregiver Alliance (<https://www.caregiver.org>)**

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#### **The National Sleep Foundation advises:**

“When we don't get adequate sleep, we accumulate a sleep debt that can be difficult to “pay back” if it becomes too big. The resulting sleep deprivation has been linked to health problems such as obesity and high blood pressure, negative mood and behavior, decreased productivity, and safety issues in the home, on the job, and on the road.”

Caregivers often find themselves exhausted at the end of the day, but many are still not able to sleep. Varying studies have documented that approximately 70% of caregivers for people with dementia report sleep problems. 60% report sleeping less than 7 hours, and 10-20% use alcohol to go to sleep and/or sleep medication. In data collected by the California Caregiver Resource Centers, 41% of caregivers said they are awakened during the night by the care receiver. These same caregivers also scored higher on the depression screening.

# Body, Mind, Spirit

## Taking Care of Your Others with Better Sleep for You

### Caregivers & Sleep Information

2024 Issue - Sleep

#### Starting Your Day Tired...

Getting a good night's sleep is not only necessary in order for you to take care of yourself, it is also necessary in terms of the quality of care you give your loved one. **Page 3**

#### Good Sleep is Gold

It merits being at the top of your priority list instead of at the bottom. Caregivers matter.



#### Keeping Family

Caregiving can have a negative impact on caregivers' health and well-being.

Better health behaviors can help keep caregivers well rested and healthy. **Page 4**

#### Sleep & Hormones

During sleep, your body creates hormones that help the immune system fight various infections. Lack of sleep can reduce your body's ability to fight off common infections.

Better sleep is a proven way to stave off dementia. **Page 4**

#### Slumber Resources and Tools



Self care is part of the circle of sustainable caregiving. **Page 7**

#### Effective Habits

Getting good sleep is a process of looking and testing what works for you. You have resources at your fingertips. **Page 8**



From Dr. Dale Bredesen's "End of Alzheimers": Try the sleep protocol: 200 mg 5-Htp, 50 mg Zinc & 2 g Magnesium at night.

## Starting Your Day Tired...

Insomnia comes in several forms—trouble falling asleep (more than 30 minutes), trouble falling back asleep after waking at night (e.g. to use the bathroom or care for someone else),



waking up early and not being able to fall back asleep, or waking up not feeling refreshed. People with depression and anxiety also have a higher incidence of insomnia.

People with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias frequently have sleep disturbances. The most common is "sundowning," so called because the person gets agitated later in the day and often has trouble falling asleep and/or staying asleep once in bed.

*A rule of thumb is that you need a good night's sleep every third night to prevent burn-out.*

This leads, of course, to lack of sleep in caregivers, and is one of the most common reasons for a caregiver to place a care receiver in a facility. Lack of sleep also makes people irritable and impatient which makes caregiving even harder.

It is important to talk with your loved one's physician about sleep disturbances. This is as important for your loved one as it is for you and your health. You might consider a night time attendant or ask for respite help at night, so you can get sleep. Medications might also help. A rule of thumb is that you need a good night's sleep every third night to prevent burn-out.

— Seeking That Elusive Good Night Sleep, Family Caregiver Alliance

**SLEEP & HORMONES...**

Your mother was right if she told you that getting a good night's sleep on a regular basis would help keep you from getting sick and help you get better if you do get sick. During sleep, your body creates more cytokines—cellular hormones that help the immune system fight various infections. Lack of sleep can reduce your body's ability to fight off common infections. Research also reveals that a lack of sleep can reduce the body's response to the flu vaccine. For example, sleep-deprived volunteers given the flu vaccine produced less than half as many flu antibodies as those who were well rested and given the same vaccine.

The current epidemic of diabetes and obesity seems to be related, at least in part, to chronically short or disrupted sleep or not sleeping during the night. Lack of exercise and other factors also contribute.

Evidence is growing that sleep is a powerful regulator of appetite, energy use, and weight control. During sleep, the body's production of the appetite suppressor leptin increases, and the appetite stimulant ghrelin decreases. Studies find that the less people sleep, the more likely they are to be overweight or obese and prefer eating foods that are higher in calories and carbohydrates. People who report an average total sleep time of 5 hours a night, for example, are much more likely to become obese, compared with people who sleep 7–8 hours a night.

A number of hormones released during sleep also control the body's use of energy. A distinct rise and fall of blood sugar levels during sleep appears to be linked to sleep stages. Not sleeping at the right time, not getting enough sleep overall, or not enough of each stage of sleep disrupts this pattern. One study found that, when healthy young men slept only 4 hours a night for 6 nights in a row, their insulin and blood sugar levels matched those seen in people who were developing diabetes — Healthy Sleep, NIH.

# Keeping Family.

Keeping family caregivers healthy and able to provide care is key to maintaining our nation's long-term care system. With the aging of the population, this issue will only grow more important in the coming decades.

Improved recognition and treatment of physical and psychological symptoms among caregivers is a growing health concern and should be considered a public health priority.

*Take it one day and one moment at a time...*



A large and growing body of evidence reveals that providing care for a chronically sick person can have harmful physical, mental, and emotional consequences for the caregiver.

*Nearly three quarters (72%) of caregivers reported that they had not gone to the doctor as often as they should.*

Increasing appropriate mental health services and medical care for family caregivers are important steps toward addressing caregiver health.

Although caregiving can have a negative impact on caregivers' health and well-being, research demonstrates its effects can be alleviated at least partially by:

- *An assessment of family caregiver needs that leads to a care plan with support services.*
- *Caregiver education and support programs*
- *Respite to reduce caregiver burden*
- *Financial support to alleviate the economic stress of caregiving*
- *Primary care interventions that address caregiver needs*

The impact of providing care can lead to increased health care needs for the caregiver. High rates of depressive symptoms and mental health problems among caregivers are compounded with the physical strain of caring for someone. Those who cannot perform activities of daily living (ADLs), such as bathing, grooming and other personal care activities, put many caregivers at serious risk for poor physical health outcomes.

– Family Caregiver Alliance

*Caregivers are less likely to engage in preventive health.*



*As we watch over our loved ones, we must also sustain ourselves.*



# Be Your Own Friend

## *A checklist for better sleep*

Despite our best efforts, we all have nights when we stay up too late, just can't fall sleep, or wake up and can't fall back asleep. There are real dangers to sleep deprivation but it is also important to take it in stride.

Holistic psychiatrist, Dr. Ellen Vora says of sleep disturbances, "I tend to believe in the body's ability to figure it out and heal...as long as we get out of the way...modern living has messed with everybody's cycles, ...The whole sleep-wake cycle is simple: Light makes us feel awake, and darkness makes us sleepy. This system was foolproof until the invention of the light bulb, and now the vast night sky dimly lit by stars and moonlight has been replaced by Netflix in bed. This constant stimulation tricks the brain into thinking it's daytime, so is it any surprise we feel wired around midnight? The obvious is to turn off our electronics and their blue lights a few hours before sleep time. Here are some more ideas for a body, mind and spirit approach to a good rest.

**1. De-stress with your breath.** A slow and full inhale and a likewise complete exhale in repetition is an effective tool for calming the whole of us. Try Dr. Andrew Weil's 4-7-8 breathing: in for a count of 4, hold for a count of 7 and then exhale long and slow to a count of 8. Repeat 25 time. (Note: I have never gotten past 12, as I remember in the morning.)

**2. Get moving.** Walk in nature or do something regular and restorative as your new routine. Be consistent and work up to more as your body adjusts and gets stronger.

**4. Yoga poses for sleep.** Some restorative poses and stretches are a relaxing thing to do before bed. Try down dog, child's pose, cat-cow or a basic yoga breath. These will set you on course to deep sleep.

**5. Aroma therapy.** Some scents will help you relax. Lavender is a good start and there are many blends that are useful. Know yours.

### **6. Learn to listen to yourself**

Anxiety is fear that has no focus. Fear tends to be more easily named. Name what is bothering you. It helps you to claim back your self-authority which you have given away to the fear. Remember what Mark Twain said,

*"Most of the things I worried about in my life, never happened."*

### **7. Sound meditation & silent meditation**

We are vibration on the atomic level, try sound meditation as a way to quickly relax. Other meditations are good practice, too. See resources on the last page of this info mailer.

### **8. Begin a Gratitude Practice.**

"Get rich quick, count your blessings." is spiritual mischief that works. Consider a practice each night of writing down or texting to yourself (or your new gratitude partner), three things for which you are grateful this day.

*A gratitude practice, changes your world.*

### **9. What to do when you DO wake up?**

If you wake up in the middle of the night, ask what your body seems to need. Maybe it's a sip of water, a pit stop or a little protein to keep your stomach from growling. Warm almond milk or some cottage cheese works for me. If my mind is too active, I get up and write out a list of my worries. Sometimes this is the only way to quiet. Once I have named it, I sleep.

### **10. It's never too late to have someone read you to sleep.**

Audible.com is a wonderful tool to get back to sleep. Set a timer on the app (with a good baritone narrator) and allow them to take you to dreamland. YouTube also has recordings and they are free. Cont'd on Page 6

# Wait Here.

**It takes as long as it takes...to recover and find ourselves again.**

Active caregiving of an ailing loved one, or even just watching over them in decline is so all-consuming that it can pull us (and everything nearby) into its life and death necessities. Its gravity trumps all. It did for me. As a daughter, I lived in a parallel future, believing it would be better...then. I am remembering back to those moments when I managed to get a little perspective on things.

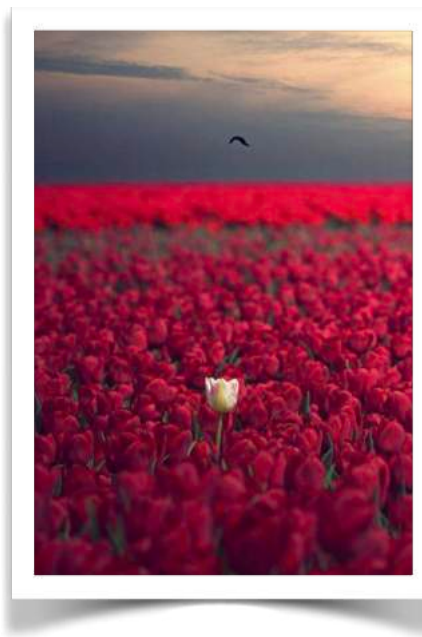
I have had some distance and healing from some of the caregiving marathons of my life. I realize now that in the effort of those ending days, I learned something important about how to live my life when it all changes. To move forward in the darkest of days, sometimes we must stay put and wait. Wait here until it gets better. Sometimes *not doing* is best, which is not easy in a doing culture. Perhaps, the way to move forward is to wait for it to change.

*But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”— Isaiah 40:31, ESV*

## Leading, following...and waiting

In partner dancing, it is all about being present to the next step. The leader moves, the follower shadows that step and makes a responsive step. It is collaboration. It is attentive waiting. The follower then waits for the next move from the leader.

*We are waiting for the slowest parts of ourselves to catch up.*



Part of your self-identity comes from the relationships you have created with other people. Caregiving shifts a relationship and our self-identity naturally changes.

At times, “Wait here” might be your next best move – an internal shift to stillness. Living in the future stopped me from seeing what was right in front of me – real choices, not just more-of-the-same daily loops. Outcomes can be richer *and quicker*, if we wait HERE.

Excerpt from the book *A Hospice Chaplain's Field Guide to Caregiving – Finding Resilience on the Frontlines of Love* by EM Hager

*Cont'd from Page 5*

## Be Your Own Friend: A Better Sleep Checklist

**Magnesium** is first on most lists as a natural supplement for sleep. You can take it internally or put it on your skin in a lotion or take an epsom salt bath. It is easily absorbed through the skin. Other important nutrients for sleep are:

**Melatonin:** tart cherries, walnuts

**Tryptophan:** turkey, chicken, eggs, sweet potatoes, chia seeds, hemp seeds, bananas, pumpkin seeds, almonds, and yogurt.

**Vitamin D:** swordfish, salmon, tuna, shiitake mushrooms, oysters & 20 minutes of **SUNLIGHT** daily.

**Potassium:** bananas, leafy greens, potatoes, dulse (a mineral-rich sea veggie), broccoli, cremini mushrooms, and avocados

**Calcium:** kale, collard greens, mustard greens, sardines, sea veggies, and sesame seeds

**Omega 3:** chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, hemp seeds, walnuts, halibut, salmon, and flax seeds

**B6:** bananas, yogurt, cashews, peanut butter, almonds, avocados, fish, tomatoes, spinach, sweet potatoes, sea veggies, & eggs

**Selenium:** Brazil nuts, sunflower seeds, beef, oysters, chicken, and cremini mushrooms

**Vitamin C:** peppers, leafy vegetables, kiwifruit, strawberries, citrus fruits, and papaya

Put it all together with Dr. Dale Bredesen's End of Alzheimers Sleep Protocol: try 200 mg 5-Htp, 50 mg Zinc pill & 2 g Magnesium at night.





# Caregiving Sleep Responses & Tools

*Caregiving includes grieving...when a loved one is ill things change.*



**Loss is something which we will all face at some time in our lives.**

Caregivers experience grief and loss when they are caregiving. It's a mixed bag with anxiety and hope and loss all at the same time. We have little opportunity to learn about balance and how to care for ourselves. We don't talk about it so it can be difficult to know what is normal. It may seem like you are the only person who has felt the way you do. While everyone's response to a change is unique, there are some common experiences.



**People often describe numbness when caregiving of a loved one.**

Many caregivers may feel numb, panicky, weepy or unable to cry at all. Some people find it difficult to sleep, others may experience physical symptoms such as heart palpitations.

Some people find they calmly go through the practical tasks. Others find themselves unable to cope and need a lot of practical and emotional support during caregiving. Some people feel, in addition to sleep



**All sorts of feelings come up during caregiving.**

disturbances, a sense of anxiety and hopelessness. People may become very active to avoid thinking about what is really happening. Self-denial is protective but like with all changes, it is not a long term strategy. Better to recognize and, name that which disturbs you, if possible, then go and do something self-honoring and nurturing. Any change is a kind of grief, even if you choose it as the better road.



**Try some new tools from time-tested spiritual traditions: prayer & meditation**

Even if caregiving is not a new experience, why not test out some new tools? Prayer is an important tool for navigating change and exploring one's own faith tradition anew.

If prayer is a practice of *talking* to our Higher Power, then meditation is a practice of *listening*. Every spiritual tradition has versions of the practices. What is important is that we give our mind and body time to unwind and calm. Find new ways to self-soothe our anxiety and fear each day so we can



**Many people find that a short meditation in their day makes all the difference to their anxiety levels.**

make better decisions and provide loving care for our loved ones. A simple meditation is to focus is on your breath or one word such as love, or peace or faith. Then return to it, again and again for 10 to 15 minutes each day. Sound meditations are another way to center yourself. Try videos or books on Christian contemplative prayer or find many other kinds of sound and/or silent meditations. Videos may be found on many websites including: [Garden of Change.org](http://GardenofChange.org)

*Self care is part of the circle of sustainable caregiving.*

## More Sleep Resources:

- Dr. Dale Bredesen's "End of Alzheimers": try the sleep protocol: 200 mg 5-Htp, 50 mg Zinc & 2 g Magnesium at night.
- The National Institutes of Health have published a free booklet called "Your Guide to Healthy Sleep" which can be downloaded from their website, [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov) or by writing to National Institutes of Health (NIH), 9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20892.
- Other helpful websites are: National Sleep Foundation, [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org);
- American Academy of Sleep Medicine, [www.aasmnet.org](http://www.aasmnet.org); and
- National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/index.htm).
- A recent book that takes a comprehensive look at sleep issues and solutions is Arianna Huffington's *The Sleep Revolution: Transforming Your Life, One Night at a Time* (Thorndike Press, 2016).
- *A Hospice Chaplain's Field Guide to Caregiving - Finding Resilience on the Frontlines of Love* - book by EM Hager, (Available on Amazon and Audible). [EMHager.com](http://EMHager.com)



**"The best bridge between despair and hope is a good night's sleep." - E. Joseph Cossman**