

The 10pm Shutdown



Finally
SOUND ASLEEP

For the one who carries everyone

Peter's Prime

All day you hold it together.

You answer the questions, catch the dropped balls and keep everyone else steady, and then at 10pm you finally lie down and your head starts playing the whole day back to you.

It feels like your body is too wound up, so you try the bath, the tea and the breathing app.

But a sleep lab study found that how long people lay awake was driven by the thinking, and the tension in their body predicted nothing at all.

Another study of about 200 adults with insomnia found that worry about tomorrow didn't keep them awake. Going back over what already happened did.

So bedtime is simply the first hour of the day that nobody else claims, and that's when your mind finally gets to process everything.

You don't need to relax harder.

You need to give your mind a different job, and every step here works in the dark, in bed, in silence, with someone asleep next to you.

The 5 Steps

1 Put Every Clock Out of Sight

Checking the time is what turns a slow night into a bad one.

Before you turn the light off, turn the clock to face the wall, take your watch off, and put your phone on charge across the room or in the hall.

Trying not to look doesn't count, because at midnight you will

look.

A study of nearly 5,000 sleep clinic patients found that watching the clock made insomnia worse, mainly because it made people frustrated about the time they had left.

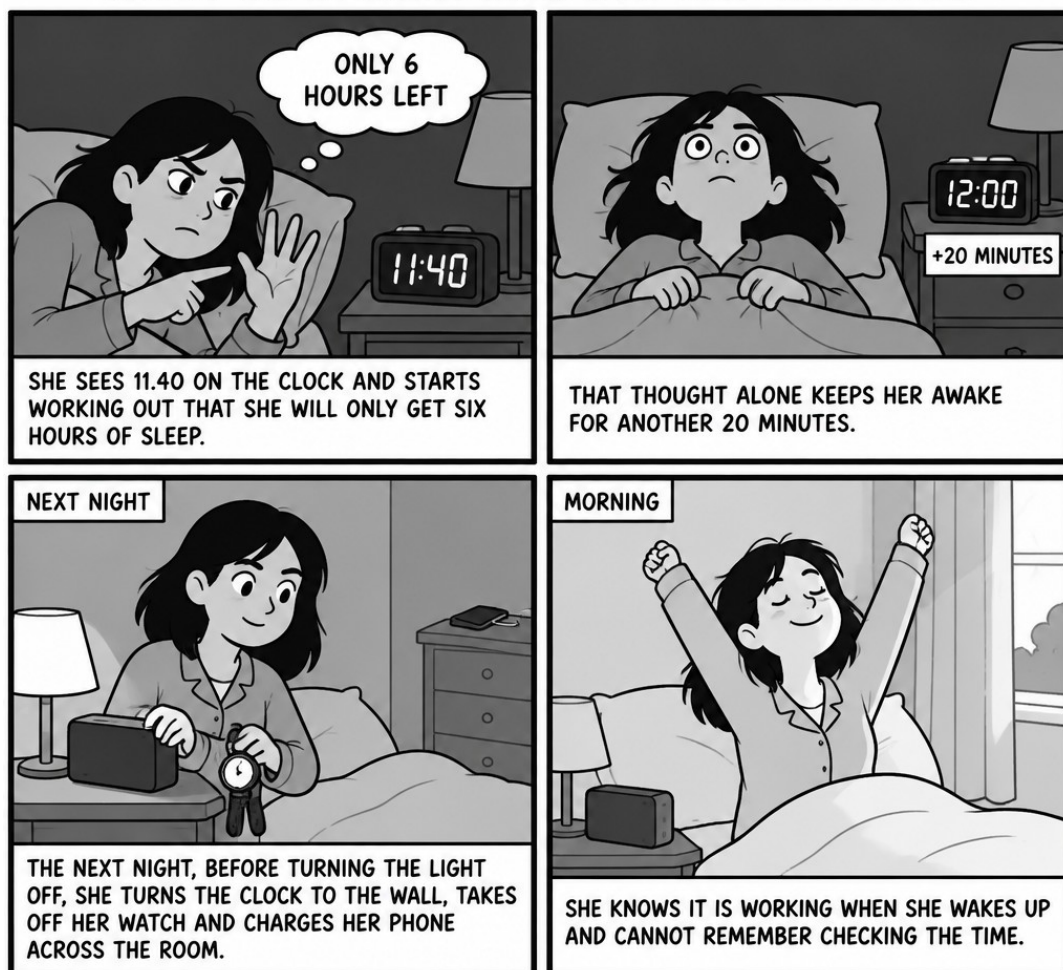
That frustration is what pushed them toward pills and drinks.

It also stops the maths.

If you see 11.40 you start working out that you'll only get six hours, and that thought alone can keep you up another 20 minutes.

You'll know it's working when you wake up and can't remember checking the time.

HIDE EVERY CLOCK BEFORE BED, BECAUSE SEEING THE TIME STARTS THE WORRYING SUMS THAT KEEP YOU AWAKE



Your mind won't go blank, so give it something faster than worry.

The moment the thoughts start, pick a plain, boring word like "bread".

Take the first letter, B, and picture as many things starting with B as you can, one after another: a bike, a banana, a bucket, a beach ball.

Really see each one for a second, then move on. When you run out, go to the second letter.

Most people are asleep before they get to the third letter of the word.

Keep the things you picture neutral, like food or animals, and stay away from anything to do with work or the news.

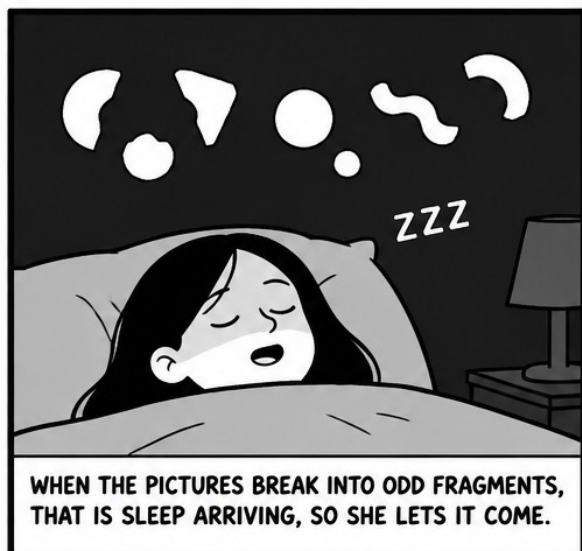
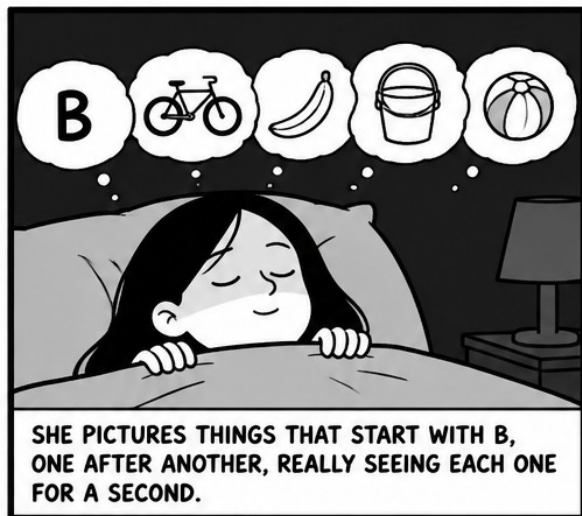
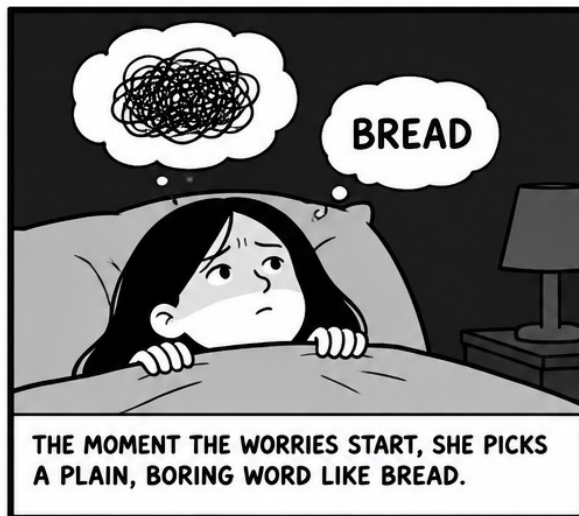
Counting sheep fails because you can count and worry at the same time.

Picturing a new random thing every couple of seconds takes up just enough of your mind that a worry can't form, and it copies the jumble of pictures your brain makes as it drifts off.

A study of about 150 students who struggled to sleep found it helped as much as writing out their worries, and you can do it lying down in the dark.

Do it quickly and loosely. If the pictures start breaking into odd fragments, that's sleep arriving, so let it.

WHEN WORRIES START, PICTURE BORING THINGS THAT BEGIN WITH EACH LETTER OF A PLAIN WORD UNTIL YOU DRIFT OFF



3

Give the Replay an Ending

A conversation keeps looping because it never got a last line.

If the picture game can't hold you because one conversation keeps coming back, stop and say to yourself, "There's the replay."

Talking about yourself from the outside like that calms the feeling without any effort, and a brain scan study found it took the sting out of bad memories.

Take one slow breath. Then ask one question, which is “What did I actually need in that moment?”

The answer is usually small, like to be heard or to have a minute to think.

Don’t ask what you should have said, because that starts the argument again.

Now whisper one closing line. It can be the thing you wish you’d said, or simply “That conversation is over and I’m okay.”

Then rest a hand on your chest for about 90 seconds and breathe out longer than you breathe in.

It may come back in ten minutes, and that’s fine, you just do it again.

You’ll know it’s working when 40 minutes of going over the conversation shrinks to a couple of thoughts and your closing line.

WHEN ONE CONVERSATION KEEPS REPLAYING, NAME IT, ASK WHAT YOU NEEDED, AND GIVE IT A CLOSING LINE



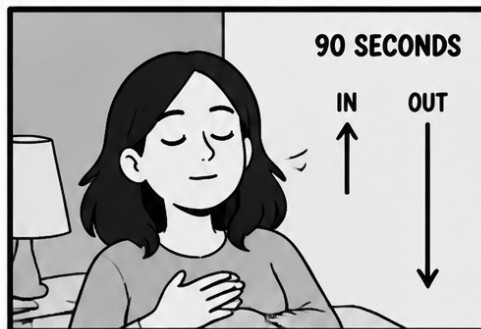
ONE CONVERSATION KEEPS COMING BACK, SO SHE STOPS AND SAYS TO HERSELF, THERE'S THE REPLAY.



SHE TAKES ONE SLOW BREATH AND ASKS WHAT SHE ACTUALLY NEEDED IN THAT MOMENT, NOT WHAT SHE SHOULD HAVE SAID.



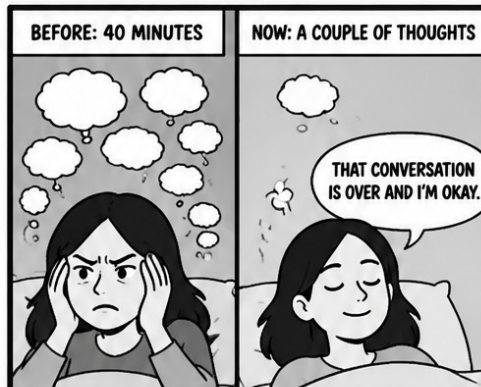
THE ANSWER IS SMALL, SO SHE WHISPERS ONE CLOSING LINE TO END THE CONVERSATION.



SHE RESTS A HAND ON HER CHEST FOR ABOUT 90 SECONDS AND BREATHEES OUT LONGER THAN SHE BREATHEES IN.



TEN MINUTES LATER THE REPLAY COMES BACK, WHICH IS FINE, SO SHE SIMPLY DOES IT AGAIN.



SHE KNOWS IT IS WORKING WHEN 40 MINUTES OF GOING OVER THE CONVERSATION SHRINKS TO A COUPLE OF THOUGHTS AND HER CLOSING LINE.

4

Try to Stay Awake

The harder you chase sleep, the faster it runs.

Sleep happens on its own, and trying to make it happen gets in its way.

So once you're settled, give yourself a new job, which is to stay awake as long as you comfortably can, eyes open in the dark, without doing anything.

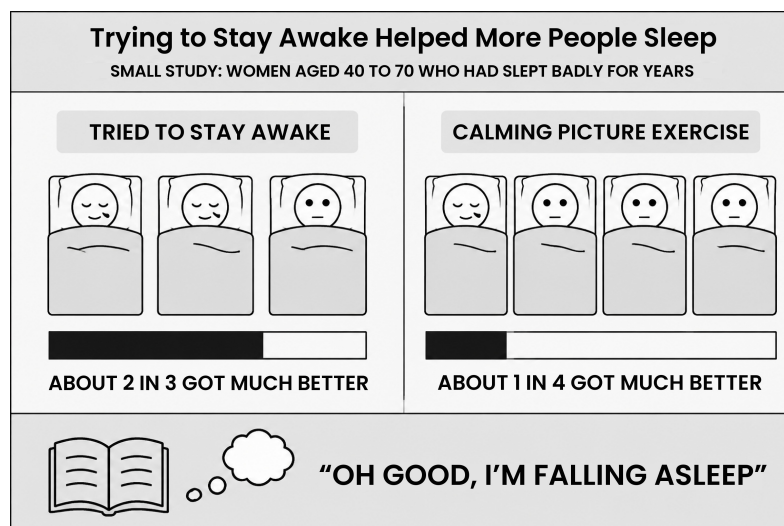
You have to mean it.

When staying awake becomes the goal, there's nothing left to fail at, and the fear of lying awake loses its grip.

In a small study of women aged 40 to 70 who had struggled with sleep for years, about two in three of those taught this got much better, against about one in four taught a calming picture exercise.

It helps to change how you see a random thought popping up.

Tell yourself, "Oh good, I'm falling asleep," because drifting thoughts are what the start of sleep feels like.



Your bed should mean sleep, not a fight.

If you've been lying there winding up for what feels like about 20 minutes, get up. You don't need a spare room.

Sit on the floor at the foot of the bed, on the landing or in the bathroom with a dim light and no phone, and go back when your eyelids feel heavy.

This keeps your brain linking the bed with sleep instead of with struggling, and research pooling over 200 trials found it's one of the parts of sleep treatment that really works.

If silence makes it worse, a low, familiar audiobook or a podcast you've heard before is fine, because something mildly interesting gives your mind a place to rest.

One warning, since it's the hidden cause of a lot of 3am waking.

A glass of wine at night wears off and wakes you up hours later, and a 4pm coffee is still in you at bedtime, so stop caffeine by early afternoon.

What to Expect, and When

On the first night, you'll know within about ten minutes whether the picture game or the closing line is working for you, so if one isn't helping, switch to the other without fuss.

Over the first week, the first thing you'll notice is that you're less afraid of being awake.

Even before your sleep changes, the way you judge the night in the morning changes, from “I’m wrecked” to “I was up a while but I’m okay”.

That counts, because most people who sleep badly guess they were awake far longer than they were.

Around two weeks in, expect to fall asleep about ten minutes sooner. Keep getting up at the same time every morning, even after a bad night, and don’t go to bed early to catch up, because both steady the whole system.

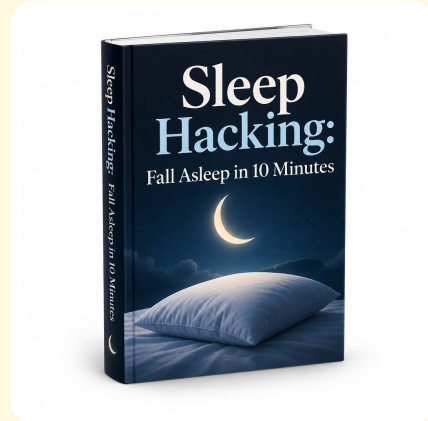
If after four to six weeks your mind is still winning most nights, that’s a job for a sleep therapist, and it says nothing about your willpower.

If you snore loudly or feel sleepy all day, see your doctor too, as something else may be waking you.

Fall asleep in about 10 minutes, even on the nights your head won't stop

You now know the problem is the thinking, not your body. So the next step is making falling asleep feel quick and ordinary again.

Sleep Hacking: Fall Asleep in 10 Minutes is a guide built around that one goal.



- ✓ The whole guide aims at one result, which is getting from lights out to asleep in about 10 minutes.
- ✓ It works alongside the steps you've just read, so you can keep the clock turned away and the picture game going while you use it.
- ✓ It suits you if your trouble is lying there at 10pm with the whole day still running through your head.

Tonight is your next chance to use what you've just read, so it's a good night to start.

Get the sleep guide

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