



The Path To Sleep, Published

My book *The Path To Sleep, Exercises for an Ancient Skill*, is now available.

“Sleep is the best meditation.”
— Dalai Lama

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The Sleep Epidemic

It’s taken me almost three years to go from the idea that there is a missing piece in understanding sleep to publishing a book that does something about it. It’s an odd situation because what’s missing is huge and obvious, but no one talks about it. First some background.

They say sleep deprivation is reaching epidemic proportions. I’m not sure I believe this is a new thing, but that’s what we read. Sleep deprivation is lowering our abilities, shortening our lifespan, and threatening our safety.

There are sleep experts who present themselves as scientists or doctors—changing costume to suit the marketplace—with deeper insight than you could ever hope for. Using calipers, magnifiers, and electroscopes they measure, assess, and diagnose.

There is a market of sleep aids consisting of depressants (benzodiazepines), sedatives (Sominex), hypnotics (barbiturates), hormones (melatonin), herbals, (valerian) and relaxants (valium) and a quirky side-show of noise makers, heaters, vibrators, and hypnotic lights claimed to relax, distract, or bore you to sleep.

Everyone seems to agree sleep is a commodity. Its lack is a disease requiring medication or surgery. Sleep,

like lunch, work, school, and Christmas, needs to be shoehorned into our schedule so that everything has the correct result.

Sleep is a state of being alive. And when was being alive a commodity to fit in a schedule and be optimized by medical or surgical intervention? Why is everyone buying into this nonsense? This seems to be a massive delusion; an absurd version of being human. I'm sorry to say that among the experts, I have not found a single exception: no one seems to understand this.

The secret that everyone seems to overlook is that none of these products, aids, therapies, or interventions work. And the harder we press these "solutions," the greater the sleep epidemic becomes.



Sleep Science

It's not sleep deprivation that is reaching epidemic proportions, it's a lack of self-awareness. And as we become increasingly less self-aware, we become increasingly dysregulated, and this manifests as poor performance in both sleeping and waking life. We are losing our minds and poor sleep—like obesity, cancer, substance abuse, and heart disease—is just a symptom. No wonder that no one's talking about it!

Like the little boy in the story of The Emperor's New Clothes, I approach this issue from a different perspective. By 2017 I had a decade of experience studying brainwaves and teaching people how to control their brainwaves. Brainwaves—more than anything else—define sleep and sleep patterns. Brainwaves are the metric of what's happening in your sleep and the quality of your sleep.

The obvious idea that came to me was this: if sleep is all about brainwaves, and you can train brainwaves, then why can't you train your brain in order to improve your sleep? That was question number one.

By then I also had a couple of years experience as a clinical hypnotherapist, and hypnotherapy is sometimes compared to sleep. It's not sleep, but it's not an awake state, either. It turns out there are many non-awake states, some of them measured using brainwaves, and hypnosis recognizes others, as well.

Hypnotherapists make use of these states all the time, and quite amazing things have been observed and effected in people who are led into these states. The obvious idea that came to me was this: if hypnosis leads people into sleep-like states, then why can't you use hypnosis to improve your sleep? That was question number two.

It's estimated that 75% of those suffering from insomnia can greatly improve their sleep through counseling, coaching, and therapy. That is to say, most sleep problems are not chemical, physical, pathogenic, or mechanical; they're the result of one's attitudes, ideas, and decisions. The obvious implication was this: if counseling and therapy improve sleep, why don't people with sleep problems seek counseling and therapy? That was the third question.

Armed with these questions I researched what brainwave training was offering to insomniacs using neurofeedback, and I found there was none. Then, I studied what systematic remedy was offered by hypnotherapy for sleep dysfunction, and I found none. And finally, I looked for the solution put forward by life counselors and psychotherapists to address their clients' sleep dysfunctions and, again, I found nothing more and a smattering of occasional references and observations. There is no holistic insight or psychotherapeutic approach to sleep dysfunction.

It's one thing to have doctors and scientists who don't understand psychodynamic systems, and that's what I've come to expect. But I was surprised that practitioners of the "softer sciences"—charged with taking a broader view—also offered no insight. It seems that sleep is something that just evades the West, in its analytic approach to everything.



Sleep Culture

I'm not trained or practiced in Eastern medicine, and I have only a passing acquaintance with Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine. What little I do know leads me to believe these Eastern approaches incorporate sleep more deeply and better understand sleep's role in total health.

The yogic tradition has a form called Nidra Yoga that incorporates two things Western thinking lacks: the

belief in a psychosomatic connection between mind and body, and the utilization of mind states to change a person's physical state. Nidra Yoga is basically a combination of physical and mental relaxation exercises aimed at moving the mind-body complex toward a sleep-compliant state. There is nothing like this in Western medicine.

Traditional Chinese Medicine or TCM, of which I know only slightly more, focuses on one's energetic forms. TCM is also very mind-body oriented, but what TCM views as the mind is not exclusively cerebral, in fact it's explicitly greater than one's mental functions and extends beyond one's nervous system as Western science knows it.

TCM is concerned with the body's energy centers, and all of your body emanates or conducts this "chi" energy. In TCM, health in sleep, like health in everything else, centers on the balance of these energies. One cannot directly translate TCM into Western medicine, and if you try, you'll find yourself talking in various circles that circumscribe aspects of mind and body.

I'm better aware of the approaches to health practiced by earth-based, traditional cultures. That is, healing in pre-Western traditions that we might lump together under the rubric of "shamanic." This includes healing as practiced in antiquity and by indigenous cultures world-wide.

In these cultures, sleep is not a separate thing, and the things that happen in sleep are not separate from one's waking life. In these cultures, altered states are extensions of the awake state. They are taken seriously and they are therapeutic. Sleep, dreams, journeys, prayers, hunts, visions, and celebrations are doorways to altered states of consciousness, not commercial holidays. They are not managed by experts and institutions. They are personal and communal experiences that are valued, cultivated, and shared.

What We Can Do About It

We can do two things. First, take my three questions and extract lessons from brainwave training, hypnosis, and psychotherapy. Second, incorporate yoga, shamanism, and TCM into the modalities of brainwaves, hypnosis, and psychotherapy.

I am leaving things out. I'm leaving out physiotherapy, nutrition, and exercise. After all, if we take the mind-body connection seriously—and we should—then sleep is as much of a physical experience as a mental one. There's only so much I can do, and I may already be trying to do too much. Ultimately, I'm just trying to point things in a better direction. You can always add to it.



The Path To Sleep

My book *The Path To Sleep, Exercises for and Ancient Skill*—that I have just published in December of 2019—is my effort to incorporate these insights. It’s available at Amazon—and at wholesale through Ingram—in digital, paper, and hardcover formats. Yesterday I submitted my narrated, audio book version that will be available as a Kindle audio book by Christmas.

The Path To Sleep is not so much a book as a training manual. It’s definitely in the “self-help” genre, but it’s not what you might expect. Clearly, the problem people are having with sleep is not going to be solved by reading a book. A real change in consciousness is required—that is what *The Path To Sleep* offers.

This is a book to be experienced, not understood. In fact, understanding is exactly what you want to get away from. Understanding is a process of putting new things into old boxes, which is just what you want to avoid.

You can read the book, but the work lies in the self-hypnosis. There are twenty-four recorded, hypnotic inductions that lead you to experience a deeper connection with your body and with other awareness. The audio files are located on the internet, and you should download and listen to them repeatedly.

Through repetition, these work to reconnect you to the energy flows in your body. You experience these as thoughts, images, memories, frequencies, awareness, perceptions, and sensations. You may experience energies as dreams or in dreams. You are looking for a new experience of yourself.

The premise that underlies all of this work is that when you increase your awareness, you also increase your control. That control may not be entirely intentionally, in fact, it may be quite unconscious but aware at some level, nonetheless.

What goes on in your body is almost 100% unconscious to the point where you may wonder whether being awake and aware offers any benefit at all. But it does, and it must. It’s not enough to establish good habits of hygiene and exercise, you must build an internal awareness of what your body needs. You need to learn to hear your body.

The Path To Sleep offers a suggestion. It suggests that you can play a role in your body's health and well being if you learn to listen to your body at a deeper level. This means much more than just avoiding pain, illness, and poor function. It means learning to use your imagination as an organ of perception, and to use your mind as a tool for physical control.

But even more than that, it suggests that what's really controlling your health and well being is your spirit, and you should return control of your life to your spirit. What this means will be different for everyone, and that's fine. There need be no spiritual prescription or dogma. This isn't Spirit with a capital "S," it's just spirit as the energy that animates you. It's that energy that must have control for you to sleep. First you respect it, then you hear it, and finally, you follow it.



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