



# Poor Sleep Is An Addiction

For those who appreciate good sleep but won't put themselves at risk to get it,  
my sleep class is an iron fist in a silk glove.

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*"It's not the customer's job to know what they want."*

— **Steve Jobs**

## Resistance

On the face of it, everyone appreciates good sleep, but few people will put themselves at risk to get it. There is something subtle going on here because sleep is something which you work toward indirectly. Good sleep is a consequence of certain habits, just as bad sleep is. The habits are cognitive, they pertain to how you think. Thinking habits are the root of all addictions.

Therapists who help people quit smoking report that cigarettes are weakly physically addictive. Physical dependence is a minor aspect that acts over the short term, if it acts at all. Smoking is largely a mental habit, and, for those ready to change, shedding it takes little effort.

Overeating is a mental habit with similar addictive aspects. The feeling of being hungry is compelling, but in the case of overeating it's a feeling not a physical requirement. When you can tolerate the feeling, you begin to see hunger as an emotional voice. It's a voice of need, fear, and sadness. These feelings compel overeating.

Many, if not most, of the people who sleep poorly are relaxation abusers. Their hyper-vigilance is rooted in their character, and they take umbrage at the suggestion that they are responsible for their own sleeplessness.

Most people who are sleep-deprived won't do anything about it. Like methamphetamine users whose teeth fall out, sleep-abusers recognize the weakness of their bodies, but they won't take responsibility for it. They feel they must carry the stress. Their need for sleep-abuse is paramount.



## What Is The Addiction?

The addiction is stress; not the acute stress we recognize as upsetting, but the chronic stress we accept as normal. It's stress that we don't even know we have because we've come to believe that being stress-free is a luxury. It's not the kind of stress for which we seek help, it's the stress that simply keeps us forever in our heads.

Stress is a coping mechanism. It becomes chronic when we accept the stressors as personally necessary. These stressors are our sense of security, self-image, -value, and -weakness. These stressors demand we entertain them in order to hold our world together. To cope with them, we carry the stress. To ask us to discard these stresses means asking us to spontaneously improve our self-image, lose our fears for the future, and other bases of our sense of reality. Many of us cannot entertain this option.

Poor sleep is an unrecognized threat to our species. It gets progressively worse and degrades all aspects of health: productive, reproductive, and homeostatic. Poor sleep — along with its close relatives

hypertension, obesity, substance addiction, poor diet, and poor mental health — causes increasing weakness in the individual and the species.

It might be hyperbolic to say that installing Donald Trump as President was a stress-relief mechanism, but it's not entirely inaccurate. I have friends who are full-fledged Trump supporters — pretty much everyone at the auto shop. They never denied he was a maniac, they just thought he was the maniac the USA needed. They felt the system was clogged with special interests and Donald Trump would be an enema. I think they had a point.

Tyrants, like cult leaders, offer simple remedies for what usually turn out to be internal problems. Metabolic rhythm dysregulation — otherwise known as poor sleep — is one of these internal problems. Your sleepless hyper-vigilance is maniacal. Your poor sleep, like Donald Trump, is an autoimmune disorder: a response to a system under attack. How much of this toxic medicine do you need?



## What Do People Want?

Sleepless people want a safe and simple solution. “Safe” meaning there's nothing to risk. Everything will stay the same except for the “bad things,” which are all the tension-producing issues. They'll remain the same. People know they can't fix their problems, so they just want relief from them, and they'll take that in any form that does not jeopardize their need for hyper-vigilance. The hyper-vigilant only want comfort that comes with a solution.

By “simple” people mean a solution that doesn't require a struggle. One in which there is no conflict of values. They would rather accept a diagnosis of apnea and don a CPAP machine than recognize that their family sucks, their life is meaningless, and their self-worth is zero. Seriously. These are the issues.

“Oh, no!” the sleep experts will respond, “They have apnea because they’re overweight and their airways are collapsing.” And why are they overweight or under-fit? It’s all part of the same personal syndrome of metabolic rhythmic dysregulation boiling down to being emotionally overburdened. Those who have appointed themselves as “sleep experts” are to sleep as the media are to Trump: they report whatever the maniac says.



## Who Is To Blame?

It may sound like I’m being condemnatory, but that’s superficial. Just as with substance addiction, emotional addiction only remedies when you take responsibility for the death-grip with which you hold onto it. People assert that they’ll only let go of their desperation when the stressors of their lives are gone. We can appreciate that. It’s just like any pain: first, relieve the source, then you’ll be free of the pain. That’s the immune response.

It doesn’t work that way with addiction, and it doesn’t always work that way with pain, either. We think this way because this is our common experience, but the habit of dysregulation fools us. It’s self-sustaining. The war is not won by devastating everything with the mentality of a leukocyte. The habit of vigilance does not create the threats about which one is vigilant, but it does create a tunnel vision that prevents you from seeing the real solution.

I can tell which of my sleep clients will improve their sleep, and by how much. Similarly, as with smoking cessation, a good hypnotherapist can predict which smokers will kick the habit. Richard



Nongard — from whom I learned smoking cessation protocols — says, “Those clients who succeed are those clients who have already resolved to kick the habit before they came to me.” That’s a little facetious, but true to a large extent. It’s untrue to the extent that there are some people whom we, therapists, actually do help, but most of those who make progress have come in ready to move forward.



## How Can You Improve Your Sleep?

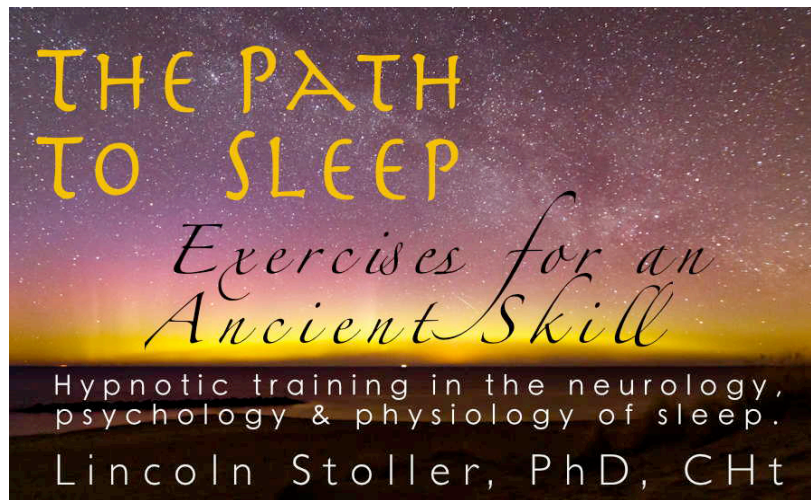
I’m glad you asked! You can improve your sleep by following the prescriptions in my book, *The Path to Sleep, Exercises for an Ancient Skill*. The book is short, but comprehensive. It includes 24 self-hypnosis, practice audio files, and to each of these you’re asked to devote a week of repeated listening.

That’s as painless as I can make it. Like Beatrice in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, I offer to take you by the hand and lead you through the purgatory of your life to the heaven of better sleep. Is that such an unreasonable metaphor? What else is there to do in heaven but sleep? And oh! The dreams!

Lucky for you, I’m offering the course online: four weekly meetings, done remotely, all materials included.

Like Richard Nongard says, the people who will benefit are the ones who are ready to make a change even before the process starts. You can get more description of the course and register for it here:

<https://www.mindstrengthbalance.com/sleep-course-intro/>



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