

## How Your Brain Sleeps

When you sleep your brain goes through various stages. In each stage, your brain experiences different levels of activity.

When you are awake your brain is very active. You are thinking, doing, and planning throughout the day. As you start to become more relaxed before going to sleep, the brain starts to calm down; fewer neurons are firing as you become more relaxed. There is an increase in Alpha and Theta brain waves as a person in this relaxed phase before sleep.

Typically, you will drift into light sleep (Stage 1) at first. If you were to awaken during this stage of sleep you might not even think that you were sleeping. It might have felt as if you were just daydreaming, not thinking about anything in particular. Sometimes your muscles will produce jerking sensations. In stage 2, eye movements stop and brain waves are slowing down.

Next you'll move into an even deeper stage of sleep, where brain activity really starts to slow down - by 30 to 50%. If you were to awaken from stage 3 sleep, you would feel somewhat disoriented and wouldn't remember much of anything that was happening in your mind.

Once your brain activity slows more than 50% of the already slow state you are in, you have entered the deepest stage of sleep, stage 4 sleep. When waking from this stage of sleep, you'll be very disoriented and may not even know where you are for a moment. It is difficult to wake someone from stages 3 and 4. It is also the time people might experience bedwetting, night terrors and sleep walking.

After spending some time in stage 4 sleep, your brain becomes more active again. The activity of your brain is almost the same as if you were awake, yet you were clearly asleep. Your eyes start to move around, like they were looking at something. This is called rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. This is the time when you dream, and if you were to awaken, you may remember your dream. Sometimes you wake up briefly at this stage just after your dream, though you may not remember doing so in the morning. Memories are encoded in REM sleep and muscles become temporarily paralyzed. Pretty soon, you slip back down to stage 1 and start all over again.

Each cycle last about 90-110 minutes. As the night goes on, you tend to spend less time in the deeper stages of sleep (3 and 4), and more time in lighter stages of sleep (REM and 2). Each stage is important to your health.

If you are deprived of stage 4 sleep, you may feel very tired during the day. When you go back to sleep that night, you may spend more time in stage 4 trying to make up for the time you missed. When you get enough stage 4 sleep you wake up feeling rested.

If you don't get enough REM sleep, you may feel more anxious and upset during the day. When you go back to sleep, you may spend more time in stage REM sleep, trying to make up for the time you missed. This stage of sleep seems to allow you to feel more calm.

It is said that everyone needs 7-8 hours of sleep each night, but sleep isn't a one-size-fits-all. Infants need 16 hours, children need 10-11 and teens need 9. Are you aware of the amount of sleep that makes you feel most rested? It also seems that you need a little less sleep as you get

older. So now you understand that is fine if you need less sleep and if you wake up during the night.

When Conscious Napping® is induced, your brain starts to slow down, with an increase in Alpha and Theta brain waves. This is why using Conscious Napping® just before going to sleep can help you fall asleep easier, and you can experience a better night sleep.

## **Powerful Sleep Protocols**

Some people can sleep anytime, anyplace, through the night, and wake up refreshed. You're reading these words, so perhaps this is not you at the moment. But if you desire, learning Conscious Napping® and developing powerful sleep protocols can help you get better quality sleep.

These powerful sleep protocols cover three areas:

1. Preparing your body for sleep
2. Preparing your mind for sleep
3. Preparing your sleep environment

### **Preparing your body for sleep**

What you eat and drink before bed can affect the quality and your ability of your sleep. Avoid stimulants, like caffeine and nicotine, and alcohol for at least six hours before going to bed. These substances will keep your mind in a more alert state. If you have a sensitivity for caffeine, you should not have any at all after lunchtime. Nicotine is a stimulant, so you should not smoke or chew in the evening, or if you wake up during the night. Alcohol may help to get you to sleep but it disrupts the sleep cycle. You won't get the type of sleep that you need to wake up feeling rested.

If you're having trouble sleeping at night, avoid taking naps during the day. Napping can interfere with your ability to get to sleep and stay asleep.

Regular exercise is a good sleep aid, just don't do it too close to bedtime. Never exercise just before going to bed.

Wake up around the same time every day. Over time, you will start to feel sleepy and ready for bed around the same time each night. Developing these regular habits will allow your body to find its natural sleep rhythm.

Avoid eating a heavy meal just before bedtime. It will cause your digestive system to work hard and will interfere with your sleep cycle, possibly with even getting to sleep. If you're hungry or have low blood sugar, a small snack will be okay. (A banana or glass of milk, perhaps. Nothing high in sugar, caffeine or alcohol.)

### **Preparing your mind for sleep**

When you develop an appropriate routine just before going to bedtime, your mind gets in the habit of winding down and it will 'get ready' for sleep.

If you watch television before going to bed, remember that tv can put you in an Alpha state. You are suggestible in this state, so watching the news or stressful programs will be counter-productive to getting your mind in a positive place. For some people, even the weather forecast can be stressful!

If you've had a busy day, or the next day will be full of things to do, put your 'work' to rest. Taking 30 minutes to 'clear your desk' and ready it for the next day allows your mind to avoid thinking about things that you forgot to think about or do, and know that you are prepared for tomorrow. Make a list will reassure your mind that it can sleep peacefully, with nothing nagging at it.

Develop a good bedtime routine. You might check all the locks in your house, brush your teeth, put your clothes out for the following day, all while listening to some soft, calming music. After you finish with these calming rituals, go right to bed. Doing this every night develops the habit of shifting your mind from the waking state to pre-sleep mode.

When you get into bed you can start your Conscious Napping®, and easily and effortlessly fall asleep. If for some reason you do not fall asleep within 15 minutes of going to bed, get up and perform a non-stimulating activity like reading. Staying in bed associates the bed with trying unsuccessfully to get to sleep. When you get sleepy again, then you can go back to bed and do your Conscious Napping® again.

### **Preparing your environment for sleep**

Your bed should primarily be the place for two things: sleep and sex.

You should never read or watch television in bed. Never leave the TV on while sleeping, as research shows that the darker the bedroom, the better the sleep. Noise can also negatively affect sleep. If you live near a loud or disturbing source of noise, consider a CD or app for your phone that creates using white noise, such as ocean waves or the sound of softly falling rain.

Remove distractions. If you have a tendency to watch the clock during the night, turn it away from you so it faces the wall. Some people journal their dreams. Keep in mind that this causes you to come to full consciousness, disturbing the sleep cycle. If you sleep with someone who snores or is restless at night, Conscious Napping® can help you hear this as soothing white noise, or not hear it at all, and imagine movement in a pleasant, sleep-evoking way.

Make sure that your bed is comfortable. In general people tend to sleep better on firmer mattresses than on soft ones, but whatever is right for you, invest in a good mattress and pillow. Most tend to sleep better in the cool room with warm covers than a warm room with light covers.

Your bedroom should be like a private sanctuary, a place you look forward to going. Make your bedroom inviting and cozy, free from light, unpleasant noise, smells and stress.