

## SOME INGREDIENTS FOR RESTFUL SLEEP

Every tissue and organ of the body needs sleep to rest and repair. Until the end of grad school, I had no experience of sleeplessness; sleep deprivation sure, but no trouble falling asleep. But since the spring of 2007, reeling from three years of sustained abuse of my own *bodymind* during school, my sleep went off the rails. Now, when things are out of balance, or stress is particularly high, sleep is my Achilles heel. It's one of the places imbalance shows up. And SO, I've had plenty of opportunity to experiment with this challenge from the inside out.

For those who hunger for the proof, beyond what your *bodymind* already knows, according to the NIH, adequate sleep is critical for cell-to-cell communication, regulating metabolism, our brain's ability to lay down memory and optimize concentration. I've included a few resources that detail these impacts. There are assuredly more up to date podcasts. If one experiences more than 2 consecutive nights of disturbed sleep, I find it important for us to take ourselves a bit earnestly by the hand, like a small child needing a bit of guidance, and apply the things below:

- Discipline regarding sleep hygiene.
- Observe the mind's tendency to become anxious about not being able to sleep.
- Assure you are going to sleep neither hungry nor too full.
- Incorporate practices like the River Rock Meditation or the Bowl exercise below.

When I do this for 3-7 days consistently, things get back on track. In the rare circumstance when this doesn't work, it's generally a time of acute emotional processing (grief, change). I sustain my effort, sometimes seek out assistance from other providers, and get the support I need. I hope these ideas will support you to find your own prescription for optimizing sleep.

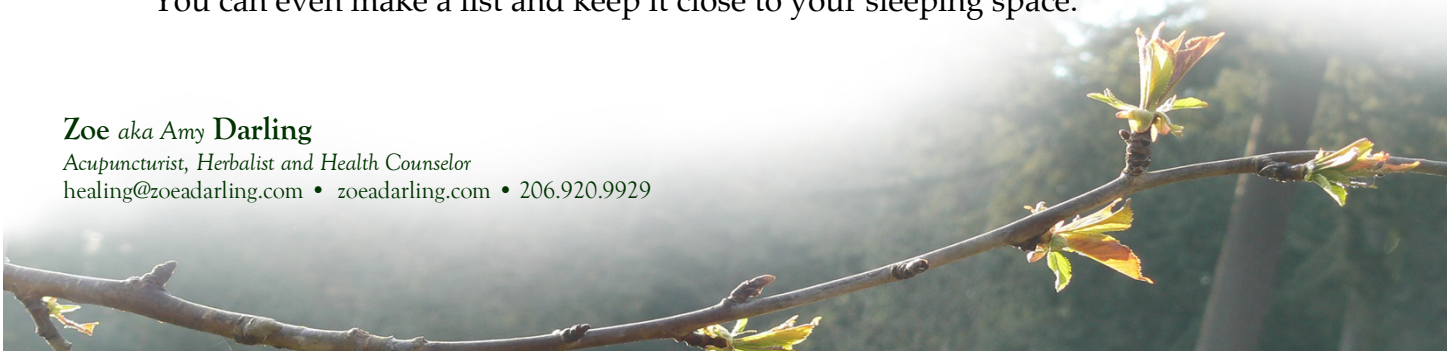
### Basic sleep hygiene – simple steps that optimize sleep

- **Moderate fluids** after 6pm to prevent or decrease night time urination.
- **Eat early enough** so you're not landing in bed full from dinner. It's also important not to go to bed hungry. If you exercise at night or have high metabolism, consider a small snack before bed to prevent low blood sugar in the early morning and a flood of stress hormones and agitation as the body tries to wake up looking for food.
- **Moderate caffeine and other stimulants after noon** (the timing and limits on this are very individual, test things out in the laboratory of your own body). Nothing after noon is a good marker for many.
- **Have bed/bedroom be only for sleep, not excluding sex.**
- **Our bodies thrive will regular to bed and waking up.**
- **Slow down the last hour before bed** (unplug from social media, conclude work projects, social media, bill paying). Even the light from tablets have been found to mess with sleep. You're an adult. You can choose any of the above. Simply know that if you also want deep and restorative sleep, a different choice will support that ultimate goal and your overall health.
- **Create an evening ritual** (could include reading, a bath, some gentle yoga or Tai Chi or meditation, aromatherapy, incense, all indicators to the body it's time for sleep). You can even make a list and keep it close to your sleeping space.

**Zoe aka Amy Darling**

Acupuncturist, Herbalist and Health Counselor

healing@zoedarling.com • zoedarling.com • 206.920.9929



- **Body Scan to Prepare for sleep** or **River Rock Practice** (MP3 available on the Resources page).
- **Try to limit intense/charged conversations before bed.** Sometimes they happen. So then, have realistic expectations sleep will be impacted. We can all survive a single night of poor sleep. Our bodies are designed to manage. Prolonged and chronic sleeplessness have more adverse consequences.
- **Gentle sleep aids:** I am not advising supplementation without consultation. It is best to consult with a provider before trying. And some have found these helpful: Lavender pills. Lavender or Chamomile tea. Timed release melatonin.

### **Sleep Visualization Exercise for the agitated hamster cage mind.**

This can be helpful either before you go to bed or upon waking in the middle of the night with the mind circling like a hamster cage. Different minds and personalities will find it useful in different ways. Explore the practice, tweak it to make it work for you.

1. Place a small decorative bowl beside your bed with small notepad or pieces of paper and pen. If your mind is doing acrobatics, write the primary thought or concern in a few key words, not a paragraph. Fold up the paper. Place in the bowl saying to yourself, "I need to sleep now. I can attend to this in the morning."  
OR
2. Beside the bowl, place the image of someone you deeply trust. This could be a person, alive or transitioned. It could be a spiritual presence that brings you solace. It may be a teddy bear, a pet. Same practice. Encapsulate the concern in a few words on a piece of paper. Fold and place in the bowl while invoking this trusting presence and saying, "\_\_\_\_\_, I need to rest. Please *hold* this for me."  
OR
3. Don't worry about the bowl, paper or image. As the mind is turning, simply invoke the trusting presence to hold whatever is in your heart-mind and say, "\_\_\_\_\_, I need to rest. Please *hold* this for me."

### **Resources of Interest**

#### **[Freakonomics Series on Sleep](#)**

#### **Huffington Post on the Consequences of Sleep Deprivation**

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/derek-kren/the-consequences-of-sleep-deprivation-that-will-keep-you-up-at-night\\_b\\_9742376.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/derek-kren/the-consequences-of-sleep-deprivation-that-will-keep-you-up-at-night_b_9742376.html)

**Zoe aka Amy Darling**

Acupuncturist, Herbalist and Health Counselor

healing@zoeadarling.com • zoeadarling.com • 206.920.9929

