



*The
insomniacs
guide to
the 7 secret
sleep
saboteurs*

Emma Corrigan

If a good nights sleep feels like nothing more than a distant dream, keep reading....your answer could lie in this report.

Sleeping is one of the most natural functions of the body – after all, we were born knowing how to do it. Yet for many of us, sleeping becomes a nightmare. Generally speaking it is our mind that stops us from sleeping soundly. The pressures of everyday life and our inadequate mental resources to deal with them, lead to long nights tossing and turning, and long days of often torturous exhaustion.

Without adequate sleep, life becomes very uncomfortable. It's hard to concentrate through the mental fog, you become anxious and stressed, relationships suffer, your social life suffers and life generally feels like an uphill struggle. Worst of all, it can feel there is no way out of this cycle.

The good news is that once the cause of your sleep troubles has been identified, sleep can usually be restored relatively quickly and you can go back to feeling human.

Don't forget, we are all unique and lead different lives. There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to matters of the mind and there is often a complex interplay of different factors causing your insomnia. I can help you see through the maze and understand what is affecting you and how it can be solved.

There are different types of insomnia and experiences differ vastly from person to person. You may experience

- difficulties getting to sleep
- waking up in the night and struggling to get back to sleep
- very early morning awakening.

...or a combination of all three.

What follows are the 7 most common causes of sleep issues I see in my clinic. Try to look at your life objectively to assess whether some of these causes may make sense for your struggles. It can often be difficult to do this as we are so immersed in our own lives and experiences. If you struggle, I can help.



Adrenalin/Exhaustion

Adrenalin is a substance created by the body when we experience stress or anxiety. It is the arch enemy of sleep. It wipes out melatonin (our sleep hormone) completely and creates havoc with numerous other bodily functions. You might feel sweaty, restless, need to take more frequent trips to the loo or feel your heart is beating out of your chest. You may feel this way when you get into bed, when you think about going to bed or you may wake up feeling like this during the night. From

an evolutionary perspective, it makes sense that we need to feel at ease and safe to go to sleep; otherwise we would be putting ourselves at risk of attack from something in our surroundings.

It is vital to reduce your anxiety levels if you want to get better sleep. You may be experiencing a generalised anxiety fairly consistently, or it might just be at night. For some people, they have experienced anxiety for so long they don't even notice they feel that way anymore. For others, they don't necessarily associate the symptoms they are experiencing with stress or anxiety. You may simply feel 'wired'. Anxiety can become a habit which sticks around long after a stressful event.

I always assess anxiety levels as part of my consultation so don't worry if you are not sure if this is affecting you. A [relaxation MP3](#) can help to drastically reduce your stress levels.

Lack of sleep can actually increase your levels of adrenalin because your body doesn't have the energy it needs to get through everything you do in the day so has to try to create that energy. You can find yourself in a vicious circle – excess adrenalin keeps you awake but yet your body continues to produce more to get you through the day. If you suspect this may be you, taking time to relax deeply is so important as your body needs a chance to rest. Running on adrenalin is like having your foot constantly on the accelerator; sooner or later the engine will burn out.



Unwanted thoughts

One of the most common things I am told is 'I just can't switch off at night'. The day's events might be running through your mind like you're watching a replay or you might be thinking ahead to the things you have to do tomorrow, or even next week. They may not even be things you are worried about but your mind doesn't seem to want to let go and let you rest. You might find that when you get into bed at night you start to worry. You might worry about whether you did everything you were meant to do in the day or you might have more extreme worries which cause you distress. Either way, when you lie in bed your mind is on overdrive. For some people, it's annoying songs or phrases running on a loop in their mind, seemingly determined to keeping them awake.

Remember, you do not need to have a completely clear mind in order to go to sleep, but you do need a relaxed mind.

It's important not to work too late in the evenings and to have some wind down time before going to bed.

When you look at your life, do you have a good work-life balance? Are you good at relaxing your mind? Maybe you need some help in these areas.

It is possible to learn to manage stress differently and have firmer mental boundaries between your home life and work life. Just a few tweaks to your daily routines can make all the difference to how

you feel and how you sleep. I can also support you to learn how to relax your subconscious mind to prevent the annoying thoughts and songs from keeping you up all night.

Not only will this help you sleep better, but will also improve the general quality of your life.



Low Mood

If you have been feeling low or if you have depression you may find that your sleep suffers. It is particularly common to wake up very early in the morning feeling very low and not being able to get back to sleep. It can often feel like this early morning waking is making your depression worse, creating its own negative cycle. Melatonin (the sleep hormone) and serotonin (the feel good hormone) work together, so when one is low, the other becomes low. So, if you are depressed, you have lower levels of serotonin which produce lower levels of melatonin. If you are struggling with insomnia, you are likely to have low levels of melatonin which is likely to result in lower levels of serotonin.

It is essential to break this cycle by working on the sleep issues and mood at the same time, increasing mood and extending sleep.



Subconscious Habit

Can you remember what started your sleep problems? It may have been a very stressful time at work, bereavement or a relationship breakdown. It's normal to experience spells of disrupted sleep when there is something upsetting, unusual or stressful happening in our lives. However, if this continues for longer than a couple of weeks, this can become a subconscious habit which may then continue long after the initial event has passed. The mind needs to let go of the past events and be 'reset' to the present.

You might feel really sleepy downstairs watching TV - even nod off - but when you go to get in bed you are wide awake. One of the most frustrating things ever right?! If this is happening, it's likely that your subconscious mind has made an association between bed and being awake, and has formed a habit accordingly.

Try this...

Look at your bed and notice what you feel when you do so. Does it provoke feelings of frustration? Does it make you feel relaxed? Does it make you want to cosy up under the covers or does it make you feel restless? If your feelings towards your bed are negative – change it. Get some new bedcovers or pillows, change the position of the bed in the room and perhaps swap sides with your partner. Spend relaxing time in the bedroom during the day – listening to a [relaxation MP3](#) is perfect. Help your brain to construct more positive feelings about your sleep space and start to break those associations.

Hypnotherapy helps your mind to let go of the past and create positive associations about sleep.



Hypersensitivity to noise/light/movement

Do you ever lie awake and feel like every tiny noise in the house or on the street outside is keeping you awake? Or you might hear every movement in the neighbours house. Your partners breathing or movements might drive you up the wall, making you feel angry and tense – not the best feelings to get you to sleep. Do you go to bed with earplugs and an eye mask? Do noises immediately make you feel you will never be able to sleep? If you are answering yes to these questions you are most likely hypersensitive to the world around you.

Consider how it's possible to fall asleep on a bus, or on a crowded beach or in front of the TV. Our brains do not require a perfect, sterile environment to let us sleep. Your subconscious needs to re-adjust to the realistic, everyday environment where you sleep and let go of the anxiety it has developed towards external stimuli.



Self talk/mindset

What you tell yourself is so important in all aspects of life; sleep is no different. Your thoughts are like the map for your subconscious to follow. Most people I see tell me they 'don't sleep'. They also expect to go to bed each night and lie awake. The reality is they must be sleeping to some extent to be alive. If you identify yourself as someone who 'doesn't sleep', you have negative expectations and you are reinforcing this message to your own mind every day. Therefore, when you go to bed, you don't expect to sleep which then becomes a self fulfilling prophecy.

It can be really hard to be positive when things feel so tough – it was once described to me as ‘whistling in a dark room’. However, by reframing your perspective, you are giving your subconscious the positive messages it needs, and will create a reality which matches your expectations.

Try to recognise the time you have slept, not the time you have been laid awake. For example, ‘I slept around 5 hours last night’ rather than ‘I was awake 3 hours last night’.

Tell yourself you can’t wait to get to bed to relax tonight. Sleep is one of the most natural things your body can do – when your mind is supporting this, you can trust it to do its job.

Again, it’s normal to need support with this from a professional.



Guilt/Fear of missing out

Often when I am working with someone on their sleep, we will uncover a subconscious belief they didn’t even know they had. These are usually one of two things:

‘I don’t want to spend my time off sleeping’ – With so little free time in our lives, many of us feel deep down that sleeping is a waste of that time. You might find yourself going to bed late despite being exhausted, choosing to watch TV, surf social media or read instead.

‘I have too much to do to sleep’ – with the constant to-do lists and never feeling that we are really on top of things, it is very common to feel a sense of guilt when getting ready to sleep for the night. Going to bed early may feel out of the question. You may not be aware of these beliefs or the feelings they create but they may be a big part of the problem. Of course, they are counter-productive as by stopping you from getting the rest you need, you are less able to tackle those to-do lists! This may also contribute to the worries going around in your mind about all the things you still have to do, and yet feeling incapable of doing them. This can lead to anxiety and exacerbate the problem further...

Identifying and changing these beliefs is fundamental to getting a good nights sleep.

About The Sheffield Sleep Clinic

Through a combination of coaching, hypnotherapy and other techniques, I aim to help you achieve the restful night's sleep you are longing for. You will also learn about a healthy sleep cycle and how you will know when you have achieved it. Sessions are tailored completely to your needs and experiences.

We will use a sleep monitor if this is appropriate to assess your sleep at the beginning and at the end of our work together.

Work begins with an assessment session where you will be asked detailed questions about your sleep experiences, and your life in general so a treatment plan can be tailored for your needs.

We will then work through this plan together, in 50 minute sessions, tracking progress as we go. You may be asked to do things between sessions to further support our work together.

Treatment length depends on the complexity of the situation but on average is around 6 – 8 sessions.

"This experience has been beyond positive and I would recommend it to anyone with insomnia"
-Hannah

"After 5 sessions I was sleeping 7-8 hours a night"
- Richard

"My sleep is back to normal and I feel human again. Thank you so much"

-Peter

"I am now sleeping soundly for 8 hours a night which is more than I ever expected. I really believed I would never sleep well again"

- Caroline

About Emma Corrigan

Emma runs a busy hypnotherapy and coaching practise in Sheffield and specialises in issues around anxiety and sleep problems. She has been featured in Natural Health Magazine, The Guardian and was a regular contributor in the 'Ask the Expert' section of the Sheffield Star.

She is the author of 'QuickCalm: Bringing moments of calm to busy lives' and provides training on issues such as stress and anxiety to groups and businesses including NatWest.



To find out more

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For more hints and tips, join me on Facebook and Twitter.



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