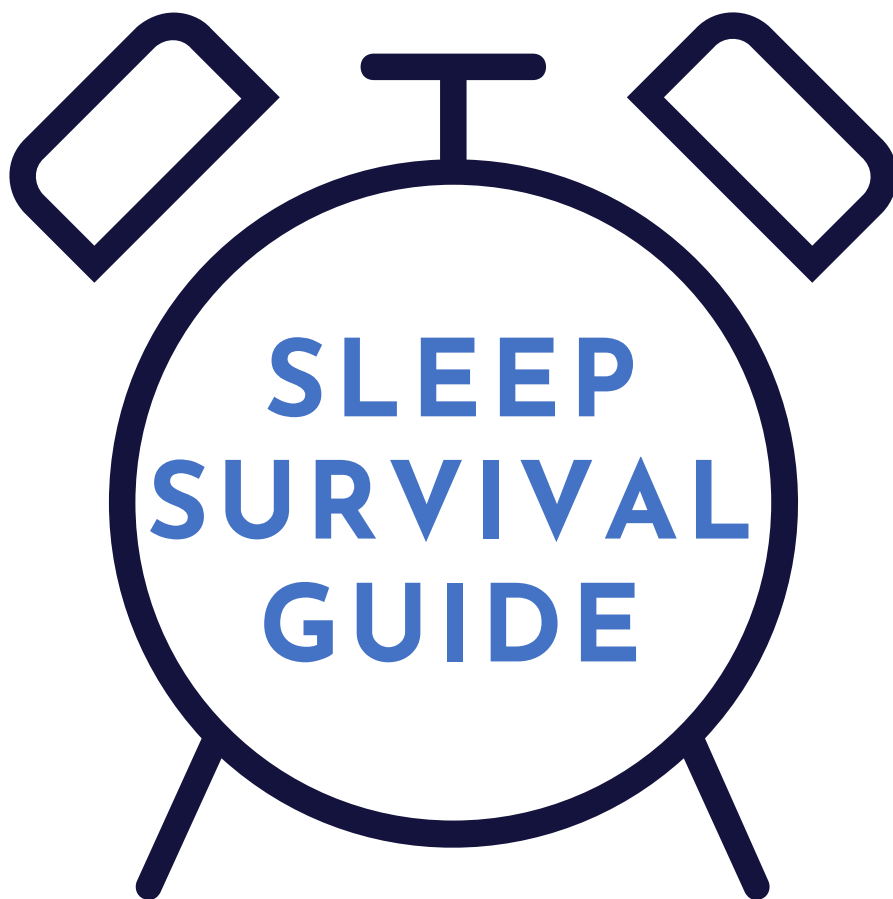


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# SLEEP SURVIVAL GUIDE

Crisis is my middle name and sleep deprivation has been my game—a game that just about destroyed me. Thanks to my Type A personality and four special-needs kiddos (of the extreme variety), crisis is all our family has known for the past 25 years. I have wrestled extensively with both sleep quantity and quality for most of my life. A radical turn-around came in 2014. Here is what I've learned along the way.

## PRICE TO PAY

The inability to sleep or a defiant disregard for sleep is costly. Designed to be a rejuvenating powerhouse, the lack of sleep wreaks havoc, making us less patient and flexible in our closest relationships, sabotaging our waistlines, and destroying our immune system, to name a few things.

*Have you counted the cost?*

*There is hope!*

## SNAPSHOT HISTORY

- Insomnia struck me at a young age
- By high school, it was entrenched. I typically got only 5-6 hours of sleep each night.
- As an unhealthy Type A, I thought sleep was underrated and typically a waste of time, although I longed to be able to fall asleep without a fight. Through my 20's and into my 30's I averaged 4 to 5 hours of sleep. There was a level of pride I felt over of how much I could get done each day on so little sleep. Then I hit a wall. Hard. Medically, I was a train wreck. I began 10 years of Ambien.
- One day it stopped working. On top of it, I began waking up in the middle of the night wide-awake!
- What is your story? Are you new to sleep challenges, or have you tasted this bitter pill for a long time? You are not alone. There is hope. Around 2014, a new sleep chapter of my life began . . .

## BATTLE READY

In this battle for our lives, our sanity, and our sleep, we must know and name the enemy. The enemy is cortisol overload. Cortisol is a “stress reaction” hormone that does amazing things for us in the short-term. Cortisol prepares us to face a difficult task or situation and sets us up for success. When cortisol production is constant, like it is for many in our 24/7 world, it positions us to self-destruct.

The key to restorative sleep is twofold.

- We must understand how to negate cortisol overload.
- We must acquire a tool kit for preventative care and damage control.

## COUNTERACTING CORTISOL OVERLOAD

Every night we do not get a minimum of 7 hours of sleep, our bodies automatically pump out up to 50% more cortisol to compensate for the lack of restorative hormones that were not released to restore, heal, and prepare us for optimal functioning the next day. (Don't panic. We can turn this ship around!) How do we break the cycle?

- Supplemental support options
- Long term strategies

## SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT OPTIONS

First, a word of insight and caution from personal experience. Watch out for attitudes that keep you from reaching out to your doctor for medical attention. This may be needed. Sleep support intervention saves lives and extends life. (Don't be a stubborn fool.) But, educate yourself on the impact of long-term prescriptions. Be wise. Evaluate regularly. Prioritize commitments that counteract cortisol overload.

### *Personal Note :*

Having spent 2 decades (from age 5 to 25) unable to fall asleep. I discovered that taking one Benadryl before bed allowed me to fall asleep without tossing and turning for hours. Over time, one failed to work and I started taking two. When two did not work, I moved back to tossing and turning. By my early 30's, my profound lack of sleep was having a devastating impact on my body, unbeknownst to me. It destroyed my thyroid, goofed up my heart, and set me up for a two wacky immune dysfunctions (gastroparesis and brachial plexus neuritis) that about destroyed me and created havoc in our family of seven. At this point, I started taking Ambien. It worked for me. (For some it works well. For others it does not.) Going to bed was no longer a nightmare. I was able to fall asleep, but I could rarely get more than five hours at a time. Short-term, it broke the cycle. Long-term, I wish I knew then, what I know now. What I know now: Sleep aids, over-the-counter or prescriptions, can be critical to "break the cycle," but they can disrupt, over the long haul, our body's ability to get a fully restorative sleep.

I am going to share a snapshot of what works for me. Please research on your own. If you take prescription medication, check out drug interactions, and please, talk to your doctor.

## LONG-TERM SLEEP CHALLENGES

Have you been on a long-haul journey of sleeplessness, insomnia, up in the middle-of-the-night, and fatigue? Your are not alone.

1. **Go to the doctor. Tell him/her what's up. Consider asking him/her to check out your:**
  - a. Thyroid function – critical! I was hypo-thyroid, tired, but wired and unable to sleep.
  - b. Sleep apnea. If you have any concerns – this could save your life.
  - c. Blood pressure. High pressures, especially in the morning when you rise, can indicate a lack of restorative sleep. High blood pressure is a silent killer. Invest in an automatic cuff and monitor your blood pressure at home. Or buy one for your office and share.
  - d. Check out your ferritin level if you are a woman. This is the “iron storage” number. Low iron reserves can impact the quality of your sleep.
  - e. Is pain keeping you up at night? Aggressively try to combat this issue. I lived with Carpel Tunnel pain way too long. The lack of restorative sleep had a devastating impact on my over-all health. I gained 12 pounds that year. Not worth it. The surgery worked instant wonders.
2. **Don't be afraid of a prescription that can help you “break the cycle” of chronic sleep deprivation.**
3. **Begin a diligent exploration of other ways to reduce cortisol overload.** I used the website's search engine and typed in “cortisol.” After ready this guide, double back and check out these blog posts. <https://runhardrestwell.org/?s=cortisol>
4. **Simple Suggestions**
  - a. Get phones, pets, and children out of your room!
  - b. Take note: Sleep before midnight is extra restorative! Go to bed early and wake up early.
  - c. Sleep in a cool room, but keep your feet warm! Wear socks if necessary.
  - d. Start walking outside. The fresh air and active movement is fabulous
  - e. Invest in lavender. Some hospitals use this a first line approach to sleep challenges.
  - f. Try tart cherry juice. Google it.
  - g. Practice restorative breathing while in bed. Relax. Breathe out for 4 seconds. Hold your breath for 4 to 7 seconds. Slowly exhale for 8. Take a “normal” breathe. Repeat 10-20 times.



## HELP! I CAN'T SLEEP!

Explore a few tricks, tips, and insights whether you can't fall asleep or can't stay asleep. Before trying any of these “this worked for me” options, please talk to your doctor, check for drug interactions, and do your own search for dosages.

### ***“I can't fall asleep”***

1. **Calcium and Magnesium** One hour before bed, try taking 600 mg of **Calcium** and 1,800 of **Magnesium Glycinate** (You may have to order on-line or go to a health food store. Most stores only sell Magnesium Oxide, which our bodies do not absorb as well.). Calcium sets us up for a more restorative REM sleep. Magnesium Glycinate is very relaxing. Read more at <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/163169#1> **Note:** I don't know the impact of calcium intake on men – might be fine! I don't know. Research it.
2. **Glycine.** This power-packed amino acid promotes sleep in a number of ways and supports whole-body health. It can also reduce joint and muscle pain. Check it out. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sleep-newzzz/201902/4-sleep-benefits-glycine>
3. **Melatonin.** Again, one hour before bed. For some this can be very effective. For others it does not help. For some it works for a few weeks. It can be stopped and then restarted. Consult your doctor before giving it to children. <https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/news/20181112/as-melatonin-use-rises-so-do-safety-concerns>
4. **Progesterone** For women only. Talk to your doctor about progesterone and sleep. Read more at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17168724> and <https://grantome.com/grant/NIH/R01-AG020082-02>
5. **L-Theanine** This amino acid can be taken throughout the day to lower cortisol impact and before bed. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sleep-newzzz/201708/what-you-need-know-about-l-theanine>
6. **Benadryl** Take Benadryl if you find yourself unexpectedly tossing and turning. Do not take more than a few nights in a row. Watch out for PM versions of over-the-counter pain medications. These contain Benadryl. Chronic use of Benadryl disrupts healthy brain waves while we sleep.
7. Explore **Vitamin D** and **Zinc**
  - a. Vitamin D <https://www.bulletproof.com/sleep/sleep-hacks/bulletproof-your-sleep-with-vitamin-d/>
  - b. Zinc <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201807/zzzz-zinc>
8. **Prescription Medications** Talk to your doctor. As you explore various options, ask about Trazadone. (Special article found on page 4) **Trazadone** “broke the insomnia cycle” in my life and set me on a course of restorative sleep. Since 2014, despite crushing life realities (like a child being placed in hospice care), I have gotten the best sleep of my entire life. I have never felt better. It took low-dose trazadone before bed for a few weeks. As I began to get a full night's sleep, I cut the dose in half and then was off, finding the extra support I needed in calcium, magnesium, and progesterone, with occasional Trazadone during high stress weeks.
  - a. Upping levels of serotonin is a powerful cortisol overload busters and prepares your body to maximize your own body's production of melatonin. Read more <https://mammothcomfort.com/melatonin-vs-serotonin-science-behind-good-nights-sleep/>
  - b. Also <https://www.healthline.com/health/sleep/trazodone-for-sleep#advantages>

## “I can’t stay asleep”

This can be a difficult, complex issue or super simple.

- If you routinely wake up in the middle of the night, wide-awake, unable to go back to sleep, try eating a small snack before bed that contains some protein and some carbs – cheese and crackers, a slice of peanut butter toast, a few nuts and a banana ... Give it a try. It can work wonders! [https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/articles/eat\\_for\\_good\\_sleep](https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/articles/eat_for_good_sleep)
- Waking up in the middle of the night, can also be a part of aging and hormone changes that are trickier to tackle. Talk to your doctor, but first try a snack of protein and carbs. Use this strategy to break the cycle of middle-of-the-night wakefulness.

## SLEEP STRATEGIES THAT TRANSFORM

To tackle sleep issues, we have to confront and combat cortisol overload. The best way to do that is to explore Restorative Wellness.

- Begin a diligent exploration of other ways to reduce cortisol overload.
  - **14 Ideas to Combat Cortisol** <https://runhardrestwell.org/14-ideas-to-combat-cortisol/>
  - **Restoring Margin – Embracing Life!** <https://runhardrestwell.org/individuals/>
  - **Great blog posts on sleep** -- <https://runhardrestwell.org/?s=sleep>
  - **4 ½ minute Ted Ed video. Good stuff.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqONk48l5vY>

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE TAKING TRAZODONE FOR SLEEP

Health Line Article - <https://www.healthline.com/health/sleep/trazodone-for-sleep#advantages>

What are the advantages of trazodone for sleep? If behavior modifications are not effective for you, your doctor may prescribe trazodone for sleep. A few advantages of trazodone include...

- **Effective treatment for insomnia.** A 2017 review of studies Trusted Source of trazodone use for insomnia found the medication was effective for primary and secondary insomnia in low doses.
- **Reduced cost.** Trazodone is less expensive than some newer insomnia medicines because it is available generically.
- **Not addictive.** Compared to other medications, such as the benzodiazepine class of medications like Valium and Xanax, trazodone is not addictive.
- **May help prevent age-related mental decline.** Trazodone might help improve slow wave sleep. This may slow certain types of age-related mental decline like memory in older adults.
- **May be a better choice if you have sleep apnea.** Some sleep medications may negatively affect obstructive sleep apnea and sleep arousal. A small 2014 study found that 100mg of trazodone had a positive impact on sleep arousal.

## PARTING THOUGHT

*“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.”*

*(Reinhold Niebuhr – 1932)*