

Case Study:

How a Stressed PA Beat Chronic insomnia

Magda (not her real name) was 32 years old when she began to suffer from insomnia.

She was frustrated because she couldn't get more than **four hours** sleep a night.

In her own words:

"I have no energy during the day. Life is about surviving from one day to the next. Not about having fun. I make silly mistakes at work. I nod off after lunch. Why can't I nod off at night in bed? The weird thing is I feel tired all the time and yet I can't sleep."

Soon Magda began to experience the side effects and consequences of her long-term insomnia. For example, even though she lost her appetite, she always felt **bloated**. Then she began to experience **mood swings**. She would snap at her friends. Her boyfriend began to get fed up and her colleagues were becoming increasingly **impatient** with her **erratic** behaviour. Magda began to feel very **isolated**.

She decided to have coaching to help with stress and anger management. However the focus of the sessions soon began to turn to her challenges with insomnia.

Coaching Session

Coach: When did your sleeping difficulties first start?

Magda: About seven months ago.

Coach: What was going on in your life at the time?

Magda: Nothing new...oh, except...yeah, that was when "Terry" started at work...I'm "Paul's" PA. But "Terry" expected me to work for him as well. He was new so I helped out at first even though it meant double the workload. But I thought it would be just until he found his feet, you know? But now it's like an unwritten agreement. Everybody expects me to work for "Terry" as well. He should really have his own assistant. But anyway, it meant working longer hours. And "Paul", my proper boss, obviously expects me to prioritise all his stuff. So yeah, that's probably when I started having trouble dropping off to sleep. But other than that...no, there was no big major trauma or hassle in my life at the time."

Coach: What are the last activities you do before going to bed?

Magda: I check my emails...see if there's anything from "Paul" or "Terry". Any urgent messages. Find out if there's anything I have to worry about tomorrow. Go on Facebook, chat to friends. Watch TV.

Coach: What time do you usually have your last meal at night?

Magda: Varies...usually...I get home at about 7 most nights, sometimes later. I like to unwind with a glass of red wine before I start on making the dinner...Sometimes 8, sometimes 9...Sometimes I can't eat that much. Because that's usually when it starts.

Coach: When what starts?

Magda: My mind starts going over and over stuff that went wrong during the day. Mr T snapping at me over something. P getting stressed out over something else...meetings that I have to reschedule, diary management nightmares... did I remember to order the catering? That kind of stuff. And it just goes on and on...while I'm in the bath...while I'm in bed...I forget about it for a bit when I'm watching TV or listening to the radio...Yeah, but my mind generally doesn't shut up. I just feel tense all the time. And I *have* tried meditating. It just doesn't work for me. My mind's not peaceful enough. Anyway it all seems to be a bit airy-fairy and New Age to me. Not really my thing.

Action Plan

Relaxation

First and foremost, Magda was strongly encouraged to refrain from checking her emails at night "to see if she had anything to worry about in the morning". This was a big wrench for her. It had become an ingrained habit because her default mode had been set to, as she put it, "**Worry then Fire Fight.**"

At first, not checking her work emails at night created a bit of anxiety. But she eventually managed to let go of the habit.

Although alcohol can initiate sleep, research has shown that it can lead to dehydration, interrupted sleep patterns and the development of sleeping disorders. So Magda was encouraged to unwind with a green drink when she got home of an evening, instead of drinking red wine.

The biggest challenge was calming her mind down long enough for her brain to initiate the sleep state. Previously meditation had not worked for Magda.

She began to use a special relaxation technique to consciously relax her physical body every evening before she prepared and ate her evening meal. The technique took about 20 to 30 minutes.

She was also encouraged to eat her evening meal at least two and a half hours before she retired to bed. (For people with sleeping difficulties, it is harder for the brain to initiate the sleep cycle if your body is still digesting food).

Stress Release

There was also the problem of workaday stress. Magda couldn't control what Mr P and Mr T threw at her or their moods or tantrums. She could only control how she responded to them...and she had to find a way of **responding rather than reacting** and then fire-fighting.

Magda was taught a technique that she could use to release stress. The technique was counter-intuitive because instead of attempting to eliminate the problem from the mind temporarily in order to relax, the strategy involved actually **focusing on the problem** while using a simple physical technique to bring blood to the front of the brain.

This helped to create **mental calm** and **clarity** about each stressful situation that she was faced with.

Self Hypnosis

Finally Magda learnt a simple self-hypnosis technique and recorded her voice to give herself the instructions so that she could "talk herself to sleep" every night.

After continually implementing these strategies as well as making small lifestyle adjustments to create better sleep hygiene for herself, Magda eventually began to regularly sleep for up to seven hours a night. Her work circumstances didn't change immediately but she was able to fall asleep in spite of what was going on in her life during the day.

All the techniques that Magda used (including the physical relaxation technique, the stress release technique and the self hypnosis visualisation guide) can be found in the **online course: Meditations for Sleep, Stress Relief and Relaxation**.

This course contains downloadable recordings as well as explanatory articles and course manuals that you can use to **guide yourself to sleep**, to **relax at will** and to **counteract the stress** in your life.

To find out more about Meditations for Sleep, Stress Relief and Relaxation, watch this video: <http://www.meditate2sleep.com/cant-sleep-stressed-out-unable-to-relax/>

Resources

Physical and Mental Relaxation

Online course with downloadable recordings and guided meditations to help you to relax, de-stress and sleep.

Link: <http://www.meditate2sleep.com/join-the-course-2/>

Nutrition

Eat to Sleep: Introductory Guide to Nutrition for Better Sleep

Link: <http://www.ways-to-sleep.com/eat-to-sleep-ebook/>

Body Clock

Mini EBook: Five Ways to Get More Sleep Using the Power of Your Body Clock

Link: <http://www.ways-to-sleep.com/ebook-5-ways-to-get-more-sleep/>

Resources Provided By: **C S Punch**

C S Punch is a holistic health practitioner based in London, UK.

Her interests include Reiki, psychosynthesis, kinesiology, spiritual massage and Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Visit her website <http://www.ways-to-sleep.com> for further information about natural remedies to heal insomnia and her other products.

The information in this document is not intended to replace medical care or diagnosis.

- 1. Seek medical advice to rule out any underlying physical or psychological condition that could be the cause of your insomnia.**
- 2. Always consult your doctor first if you are considering coming off prescribed medication.**

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