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Sleep

Bedtime Patterns: Teach your body how to relax and prepare for sleep at bedtime. Build a ritual of activities that you do every night. These should be low-key: Save the heavy exercise for the mornings.

Relax for twenty minutes. Meditate. Take a hot bath or a slow stroll around the block. Knit, read, work on your model trains... whatever makes you feel peaceful and happy. This should not take place in the bedroom.

Timing: Try to go to sleep at the same time every night, before 11 pm. If you are having trouble with your sleep, get up the same time every morning, too (yes, on weekends!) to reinforce the training. If you find yourself awake at night, relax your body and try to drift off. If you can't, get up rather than stare at the ceiling. If you think it's possible to fall asleep, repeat your nighttime ritual and go back to bed. If not, do something else until you start to feel sleepy.

Environment: The bedroom itself should only be used for sleep and sex. Prepare your space for restful sleep. If there's a TV in there, take it out. It should be quiet. If you cannot achieve quiet, try some white noise from a fan to block out background chatter. The key here is to eliminate sensory stimulation.

Likewise, your bedroom should be dark. Use opaque curtains or a blindfold if necessary. Personally, I use an eye-pillow. It blocks all ambient light, and the gentle pressure feels great. Blocking light is important because it allows your brain to generate melatonin.

Reduce Caffeine: Try to limit your intake during the day and avoid stimulants after 6pm. This includes caffeinated soda and chocolate (sorry!). One Hershey's kiss won't make or break you, but use your common sense. Green tea contains less caffeine than black tea, and herbal tea is usually caffeine-free.

Give your sleep some respect: I have people tell me they are too busy to sleep and they can't stop working, but they need to remember that a tired brain is not efficient. Your memory and decision-making will suffer with sleep deprivation. Extreme exhaustion will literally turn a sane person into a temporary schizophrenic. Getting sleep *is* your job if you want to be productive!