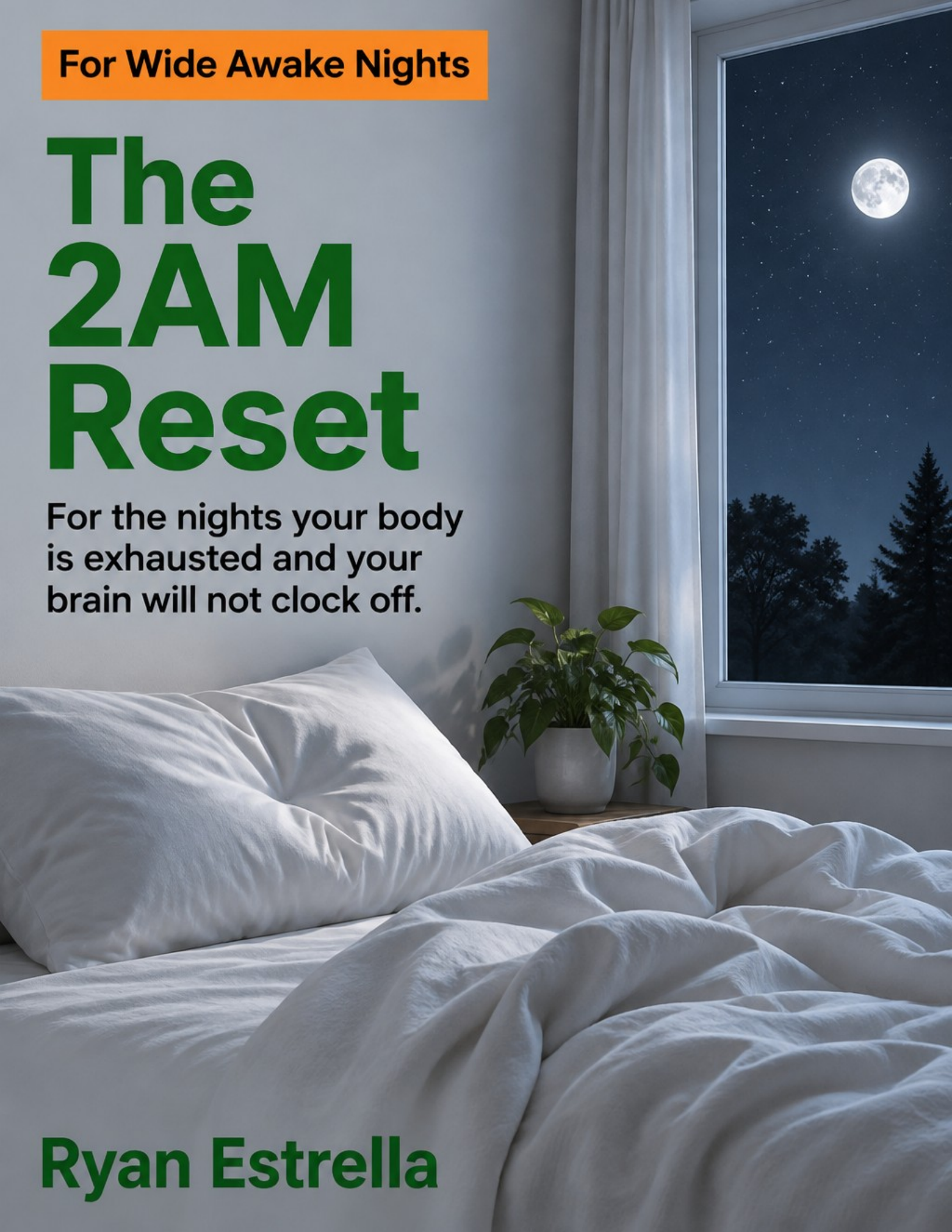


For Wide Awake Nights

The 2AM Reset

For the nights your body
is exhausted and your
brain will not clock off.

Ryan Estrella



Every night, a mother sat on the edge of her son's bed with a book open in her hands.

She read him the same kind of thing each time. Clench your fists and let them go.

Then do the same with your arms and your shoulders, slowly, all the way through the body.

It was a book of relaxation exercises, and his swimming coach had handed it to her.

Night after night she read, and night after night he followed along. After a while, something odd happened.

In his coach's words, she would just open the book, say two things, and he'd be asleep.

That boy was Michael Phelps.

I love that story because the greatest swimmer of his time learned to switch off the same way he learned to swim.

He practised it, in bed, as a kid, years before he ever needed it.

Settling down was a skill, and he got very good at it.

Now think about your own nights. It's 2am and your body is heavy. Your eyes ache.

But your brain is wide awake, going over tomorrow, last week, the email you forgot and the thing someone said.

You're more than tired enough to sleep, so what you need is a way to stand your brain down.

I wrote this for you, the person lying in the dark with a tired body and a loud mind.

I want you to have something calm and simple to do at that hour, something that's yours.

Here is what I believe. Your brain at 2am is on watch. It thinks staying alert is keeping you safe, and it needs to be told, gently, that it can stand down.

I believe 'just relax' and 'empty your mind' are some of the least useful words anyone can say to a person awake in the night, because they ask for the one thing a 2am brain can't do.

And I believe trying hard to sleep is part of what keeps you awake.

At 2am your job is to go off duty, and sleep is welcome to follow.

The research behind this is quieter and more surprising than you'd guess.

In a sleep lab, people listened to a short recording about a dolphin diving deeper into the sea, and their sleep got deeper.

Others heard the same calm voice describe a boat floating on the surface, which was just as relaxing, and it did nothing for their sleep.

So the picture you hold in your head as you drift off can change how deeply you sleep.

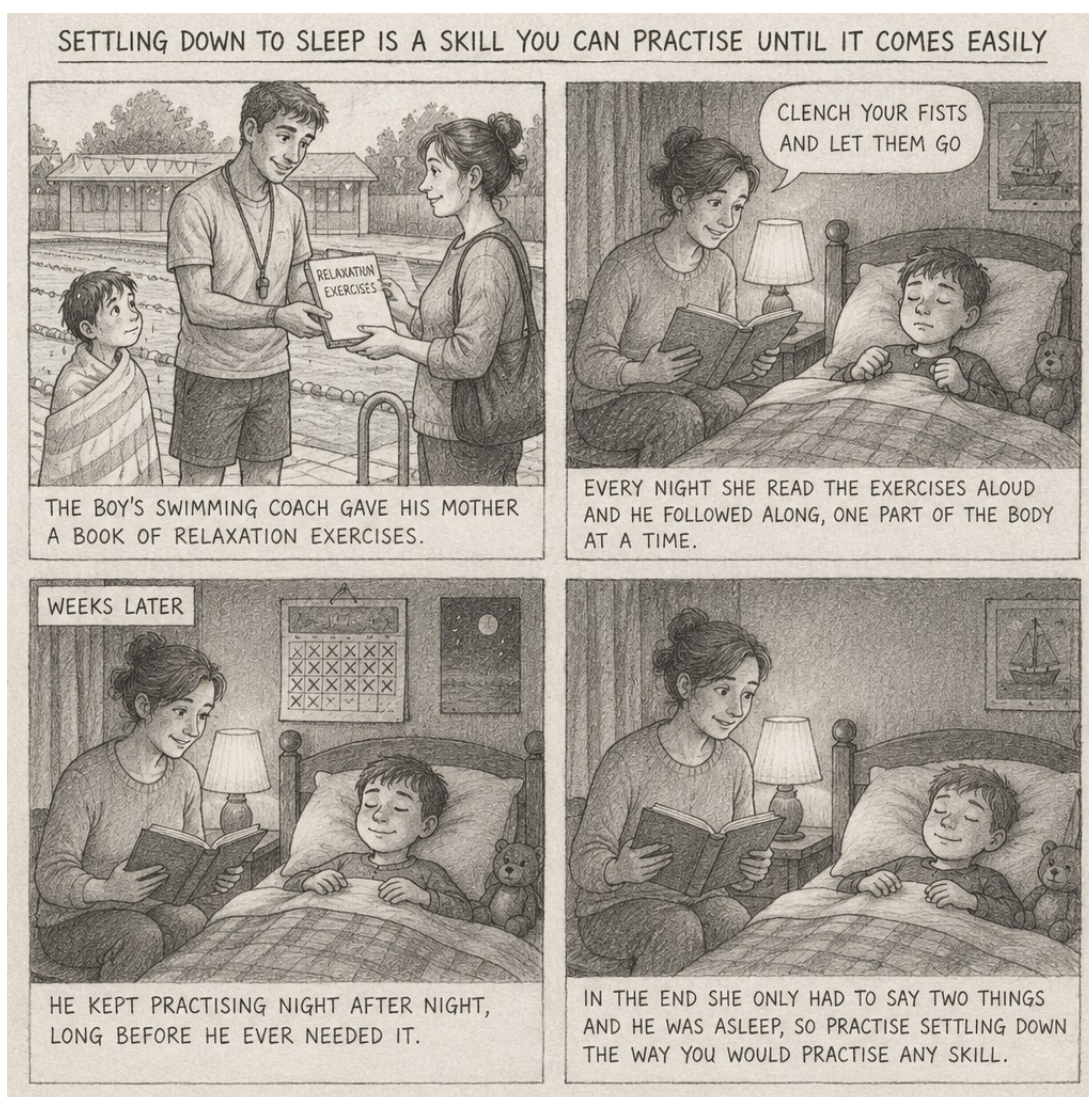
In a study of nearly 5,000 sleep-clinic patients, one small habit, watching the clock, made the night more frustrating.

And the best athletes in the world wake at 3am too, but they have a plan for it.

Here's what this guide gives you:

- Why your brain stays on duty at night, explained so the 2am loop finally makes sense.

- The first move to make when you surface, so the thought that woke you loses its grip.
- A breathing pace that turns the volume down without becoming another task.
- A countdown that works better the more you lose track of it.
- How to pick the picture in your head that lab studies link with deeper sleep.
- One line to repeat that gives your mind permission to let go.
- The habit after the script that most people get wrong, and the simple fix.





YOUR BODY

Eyes aching

Heavy

Tired enough to sleep

YOUR MIND

Tomorrow

Last week

The email you forgot

What someone said

What you need: a way to stand your brain down

YOUR BRAIN AT 2AM THINKS STAYING ALERT KEEPS YOU SAFE,
SO TELL IT GENTLY THAT IT CAN STAND DOWN



AT 2AM THE WOMAN IS EXHAUSTED,
BUT HER MIND KEEPS GOING OVER
EVERYTHING.



HER BRAIN BEHAVES LIKE A GUARD ON WATCH
THAT BELIEVES STAYING AWAKE IS KEEPING
HER SAFE.

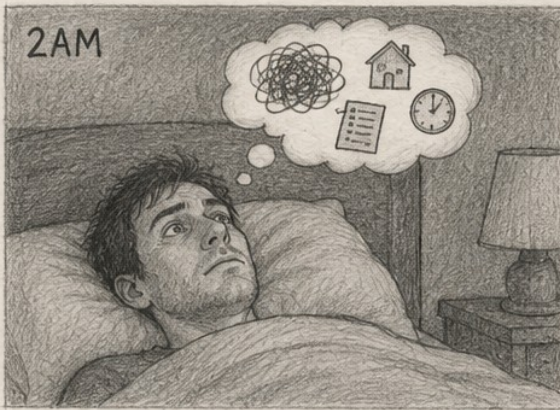


INSTEAD OF FIGHTING HER BRAIN, SHE
GENTLY TELLS IT THAT IT IS SAFE TO STOP.



WHEN YOUR BRAIN IS ON WATCH AT NIGHT,
TELL IT GENTLY THAT IT CAN GO OFF DUTY.

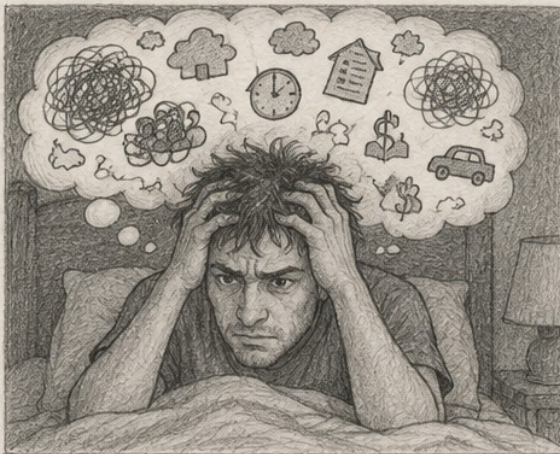
TELLING YOURSELF TO 'JUST RELAX' OR 'EMPTY YOUR MIND'
ASKS FOR THE ONE THING A 2AM BRAIN CANNOT DO



THE MAN IS AWAKE AT 2AM WITH A FEW THOUGHTS GOING ROUND HIS HEAD.



HE REMEMBERS THE ADVICE HE HAS HEARD AND TRIES HARD TO FOLLOW IT.



TRYING TO FORCE HIS MIND EMPTY ONLY MAKES THE THOUGHTS LOUDER.



INSTEAD OF ORDERING YOURSELF TO RELAX, GIVE YOURSELF SOMETHING CALM AND SIMPLE TO DO.

TRYING HARD TO FALL ASLEEP KEEPS YOU AWAKE, SO GO OFF DUTY AND LET SLEEP FOLLOW



THE WOMAN IS TRYING AS HARD AS SHE CAN TO MAKE HERSELF FALL ASLEEP.



THE HARDER SHE TRIES, THE MORE AWAKE SHE FEELS.

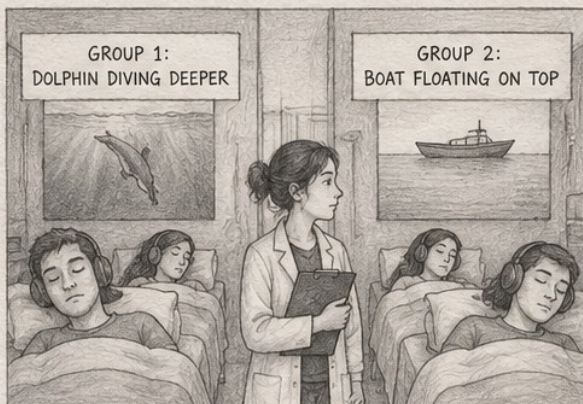


SHE STOPS TRYING TO SLEEP AND SIMPLY LETS HERSELF GO OFF DUTY.



AT 2AM YOUR ONLY JOB IS TO GO OFF DUTY, AND SLEEP IS WELCOME TO FOLLOW.

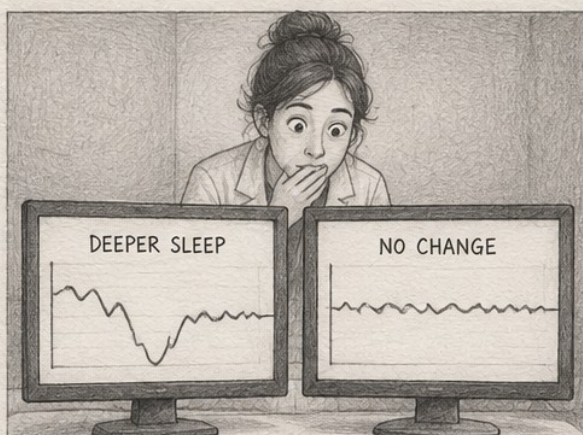
PICTURING A DOLPHIN DIVING DEEPER MADE PEOPLE SLEEP MORE DEEPLY,
WHILE AN EQUALLY CALM BOAT FLOATING ON TOP DID NOT



IN A SLEEP LAB, ONE GROUP HEARD A CALM STORY OF A DOLPHIN DIVING DEEPER AND ANOTHER GROUP HEARD A BOAT FLOATING ON THE SURFACE.



BOTH GROUPS FOUND THEIR RECORDING JUST AS RELAXING AS EACH OTHER.



BUT ONLY THE DOLPHIN GROUP SLEPT MORE DEEPLY, AND THE BOAT GROUP'S SLEEP DID NOT CHANGE.



AS YOU DRIFT OFF, HOLD A PICTURE OF SINKING DEEPER IN YOUR MIND, BECAUSE IT CAN CHANGE HOW DEEPLY YOU SLEEP.

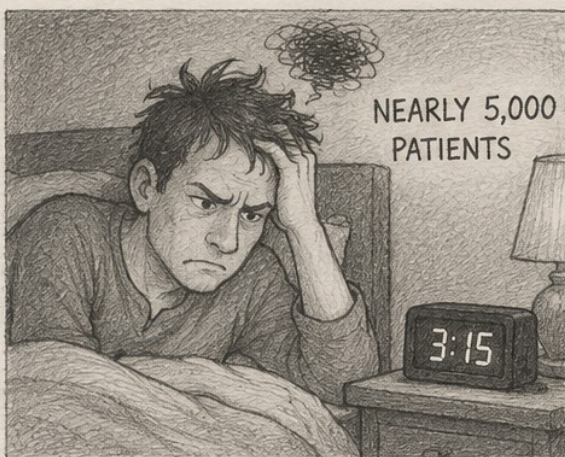
WATCHING THE CLOCK DURING THE NIGHT MAKES BEING AWAKE MORE FRUSTRATING



THE MAN WAKES IN THE NIGHT AND CHECKS THE CLOCK.



A WHILE LATER HE CHECKS IT AGAIN AND STARTS COUNTING THE HOURS HE HAS LEFT.



EVERY TIME HE LOOKS, HE FEELS MORE FRUSTRATED, JUST AS A STUDY OF NEARLY 5,000 SLEEP-CLINIC PATIENTS FOUND.



TURN THE CLOCK AWAY SO YOU ARE NOT TEMPTED TO WATCH IT IN THE NIGHT.



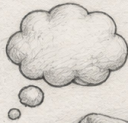
What Helps at 2am and What Doesn't

KEEPS YOU AWAKE

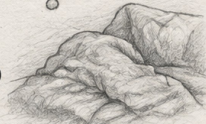
✗ 'Just relax'



✗ 'Empty your mind'



✗ Trying hard to sleep



✗ Watching the clock

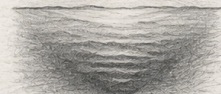


HELPS

✓ Telling your brain it can stand down



✓ A picture of sinking deeper



✓ A plan for waking at night



✓ Practising it like a skill



Go off duty and let sleep follow

- **Instagram @level.up.within**

Sources

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2. Combertaldi & Rasch, 2020. Healthy sleepers can worsen their sleep by wanting to do so. Nature and Science of Sleep. Healthy young sleepers.
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