

"Why Can't I Sleep, Even When I am Exhausted?" – Recommended Reading

If you're struggling with sleep, you're not alone. Stress, worry, life changes, and health challenges can all disrupt rest. The books below are excellent starting points for understanding sleep and learning practical ways to improve it.

Understanding Why Sleep Matters

Why We Sleep – Matthew Walker

A clear and engaging overview of why sleep is essential for memory, mood, immune function, and long-term health. This book helps explain what happens in the brain while we sleep — and why protecting sleep is one of the most powerful health decisions we can make.

The Twenty-Four Hour Mind – Rosalind Cartwright

Explores how sleep and dreaming help us process emotions. Particularly helpful if stress, grief, or relationship struggles are affecting your sleep.

Practical Strategies for Improving Sleep

Sink into Sleep – Judith R. Davidson

A straightforward, step-by-step guide based on cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I). Offers practical tools you can begin using right away.

Quiet Your Mind and Get to Sleep – Colleen Carney & Rachel Manber

A gentle workbook for people whose sleep is disrupted by worry or racing thoughts. Includes exercises and structured guidance to calm the mind at night.

Nightmares and Trauma-Related Sleep Problems

Putting Trauma to Sleep – Jaan Reitav & Celeste Thirlwell

A practical approach to sleep repair for those struggling with trauma.

Reclaiming Your Life from a Traumatic Experience – Barbara Rothbaum & Edna Foa

Provides practical strategies for managing trauma-related symptoms, including sleep and nightmares.

Stress, Safety, and the Nervous System

The Pocket Guide to the Polyvagal Theory – Stephen Porges

An accessible introduction to how our nervous system responds to stress — and why feeling safe is essential for good sleep. Helpful if anxiety or hyper-alertness keeps you awake.

Burnout – Emily & Amelia Nagoski

Explains how stress affects the body and how to “complete the stress cycle.” While not a sleep book specifically, it offers powerful tools that often improve sleep naturally.

A Gentle Reminder

Improving sleep rarely happens overnight. Small, consistent changes — regular wake times, reducing evening stimulation, managing stress during the day, and creating a sense of safety at night — often make the biggest difference.

If sleep problems persist (especially loud snoring, breathing pauses, or severe insomnia), consider speaking with a healthcare professional.