



Beating Insomnia

Is there anything more frustrating than lying in bed listening to the other half/ cat/ dog (delete as applicable!) snoring soundly while being wide awake yourself? Have you noticed how the more you seem to 'try' and do something, the harder it is? 'Trying' to sleep usually means you will inevitably find yourself getting cross, stressed and then worrying about how tired you will be tomorrow after a short and restless night.

Insomnia is caused by a variety of reasons; from stress, health issues, smoking, drinking, and medication. It is also sometimes brought on by no other reason than a few sleepless nights which have become a habit caused by being stressed about not sleeping!

When information comes into the brain it goes into either the prefrontal cortex (as a normal response) or the amygdala (which is the brain's alarm system). Depending on what that information is, it depends on how the brain files and deals that piece of information. If the amygdala response is triggered (by a stressful stimulus) it then triggers a chain of chemical reactions inside the body stimulating a surge of cortisol which then activates the Sympathetic Nervous System, triggering the 'fight and flight' response: raised heart beat, increasing blood pressure and raised adrenaline. Not the ideal circumstances by which to have a restful night's sleep!

I tackle insomnia in three distinct stages using hypnotherapy. First we establish what has triggered this overactive response and start to 'information-gather' to arm us with the tools by which to desensitize the amygdala. I then teach self hypnosis which enables a reduction in brain wave function to aid sleep and to clear anxious thoughts and worries. All of this is then pulled together into a final sleep session using self hypnosis, desensitization and lots of sleep metaphors and stories resulting in the overactive amygdala response effectively having been sent to sleep itself and shut down to a normal level...resulting in a peaceful night's sleep.

Good, restful sleep enables the subconscious part of our mind to make sense of our day by processing the information held in the prefrontal cortex and transferring it to the hippocampus part of our brain responsible for short and long term memory. It also allows our bodies rest, mend and heal themselves.

As any parent of small children will know, sleep deprivation is a form of torture for a very good reason! Insomnia isn't just something that has to be lived with; it's a very reactive condition that can be reversed with the right tools and mindset.

Next month, with Christmas coming up, I will be discussing the modern day epidemic.....Stress!

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