

Racing Thoughts at Night

Cheat Sheet



For the 1am version of you whose brain will not clock out. Work down the steps in order
- most nights you will not need all five.

1 KEEP IT ON THE NIGHTSTAND

2 WORK TOP TO BOTTOM

3 AIM FOR SLEEPY, NOT ASLEEP

The Bedside Brain Dump

FIRST MOVE, THE MOMENT A WORRY STARTS LOOPING

1

Keep a pad and pen within arm's reach. Write the worry down in keywords, not essays - lights low, eyes half closed, spelling optional. Your brain repeats what it is afraid you will forget; a written worry stops re-announcing itself.

ON THE PAD dentist email Sam back rent - Friday that weird comment



The 15-Minute Rule

AWAKE AND SPIRALING FOR WHAT FEELS LIKE 15 MINUTES OR MORE

2

Get up. Leave the bedroom if you can, keep the lights dim, and do something genuinely boring: fold laundry, flip through a dull book, sort a drawer. Come back only when your eyelids are heavy. It feels backwards, but it keeps the bed meaning sleep. Beds are for sleeping, not board meetings.



The Cognitive Shuffle

BACK IN BED AND THE THOUGHTS TRY TO RESTART

3

Pick a random letter and picture unrelated objects that start with it, one every few seconds. No stories, no connections - just images. When you run dry, pick a new letter. The stream is too incoherent for worry to ride on, and drifting between random images is what a falling-asleep brain does anyway.

LIKE THIS B: banana bicycle bassoon beach ball then try M...



Slow Body Scan, Long Exhales

WHEN THE MIND SLOWS BUT THE BODY IS STILL WIRED

4

Breathe in for about 4 counts, out for 6 to 8. On each long exhale, visit one body part from the toes upward and let it go heavy into the mattress: feet, calves, knees, hips, and so on. Reach your face, start over. Losing count or losing your place is a good sign - follow it down.



The No-Clock Rule

ALL NIGHT, EVERY NIGHT, NON-NEGOTIABLE

5

Do not check the time. Turn the clock away, leave the phone face down and out of reach. Checking the time is doing math on your own doom: "if I fall asleep right now I get four hours" wakes your brain up faster than the worry did. Whatever the clock says, the plan on this page stays the same.



NIGHT FACT

The 3am brain lies

Middle-of-the-night thoughts feel absolutely true because the rational part of your cortex is half offline while the alarm system stays on shift. Do not argue with a 3am thought and do not believe it - postpone the verdict to daylight. Almost every 3am certainty shrinks by breakfast.

