

# 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.

