

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 113: 5 Tools I Use for Faster and Better Sleep

Show notes and links at tim.blog/podcast

Hello boys and girls. This is Tim Ferriss and welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show. This is an in between-isode, a short little morsel that I sometimes do in place of the longer format interviews, which are often one, two, three hours in length and involve deconstructing world class performers from the worlds of finance, sports, music, art, everything in between. But this time we're going to talk about sleep, because many of you have been asking for more in between-isodes, and I thought I would touch upon some of the tools and approaches that I have found very helpful for facilitating not only rapid onset of sleep, but higher quality sleep.

I have struggled with insomnia for most of my adult life, and that would be onset insomnia.

If these things can work for me, I think they can work for many of you, as well. So here we go. I'm going to talk about five or so things that have really helped me, very, very directly. The first is something called the chilipad, and that is spelled C-H-I-L-I-pad. This was introduced to me by either Rick Ruben, the legendary music producer, or Kelly Starrett. Kelly Starrett, MobilityWOD, famed cross fit coach. Both of these guys recommended the chili pad before I bought one. What the chili pad entails is a thin sheet that you put under your normal bed sheets. A unit next to the bed circulates water through that sheet. You can modulate the temperature between 55 degrees and 110 degrees Fahrenheit. So you can use it to keep cool and you can use it to heat yourself up.

What makes it very unique is you have multiple zones. So let's just say you are sleeping with a partner in a bed and many women are like space heaters; they run so hot. Yet, they're under three or four blankets. And I've heard this from many, many guys who have to sleep with one leg on top of the sheet, and then they get cold and they put it under, and then they overheat, etc. The chili pad solves all of this. But even if you're not with someone else, it is extremely effective for, in most cases, allowing you to sleep cool but very comfortable and get to sleep sooner, but dramatically improve also the quality of your sleep and feeling of restfulness in the morning.

This has been a game changer for I know both Rick and Kelly, and I've experienced it myself. And friends that I've recommended it to in Silicon Valley have said, in several cases: Tim, have loved your advice, read the book for years; this is the single biggest game changer that you've introduced me to.

The chili pad, it's not inexpensive but check it out and you can make your own decision. You can get it on Amazon or other places. Chilipad. C-H-I-L-I-P-A-D. That is number one.

Number two is hanging upside down. I've spoken about this in other podcasts so I'm not going to spend a ton of time on it. But this was recommended to me by an Olympic weight lifter who has four or five world records, is in his 60s and can still throw hundreds of pounds overhead and land in an ass to heels squat, snatch position. He's a beast. He can also do that on a wobble board, like an indo board, just to give you an idea of the shape this guy is in. One of his principles is hanging upside down after any weight training session. What I've taken that to mean for my own life, even when I'm not on a training day, and this is a controversial [00:09:00] term but decompressing the spine or elongating the spine, at the very least, by hanging upside down using, in my case, gravity boots.

Teeter hang up gravity boots, T-E-E-T-E-R are what I use. There are a number of different options out there. That can have some safety risks, since they're basically ski boots with hooks on them and you flip yourself upside down and hang upside down, from, say, a standard pull up bar or something like that. You could use an inversion table. Teeter makes those, as well, which is much easier to control. Or you could use a device that allows you to stretch the spine on the floor. There's something called the Lynx, L-Y-N-X. Teeter also makes one of these devices and I will often have all of them in my house in various places. Since not all nights do I want to go into the garage, strap on these ski boots, flip upside down, and in some cases, hold weights then to further emphasize the traction of sorts.

So hanging upside down, that would be number two. I should emphasize that you don't need to do all of these things. If you add even one or two of these, I think each can have a tremendous effect on your onset and quality of sleep. Next, we have sleep mask and ear plugs. I'm going to count this as one unit. That doesn't sound very interesting or original until I tell you very, very specifically what I'm using. I've tried every sleep mask imaginable, and most of them suck balls; they're terrible. They're so uncomfortable. They fall off, they get twisted on your face; they're just the worst. Earplugs, ditto.

So I have found two models in each respect that work tremendously well. The Sleep Master sleep mask, cheesy name, great product. Sleep Master sleep mask. This was introduced to me by a friend named Jeffrey Zurofsky. Some of you may recognize his name. He was JZ, a chef in the Four Hour Chef who was very, very involved with the entire process.

We did the food marathon together, among other things, in New York City. So the Sleep Master Sleep Mask'; a few things make this very interesting. Number one, it's basically satin so it's very, very comfortable. It's not rough. It doesn't have edges on it that would bother you. The most important feature, I think, is that it goes over your ears, not on top of your ears. This seems like a very minor detail and it turns out to be a huge design change. That means a number of things. It quiets things down for you. It doesn't irritate your ears. It doesn't move around a lot. And number three, if you are in a very hot room, it could be a little toasty for you. But the Sleep Master sleep mask, check it out; it's fantastic. Also it doesn't use elastic; it uses Velcro on the very back.

The ear plugs, I've tried a lot of ear plugs and the ear plugs I ended up using more often are the 3M – and get ready for the worst product name ever – ear soft FX, spelled E hyphen A hyphen R, lower case S-O-F-T-F-X. So 3M, E-A-Rsoft FX. These are disposable ear plugs that I often reuse until they lose their bounce. You'll get a box of these on Amazon for like \$20, and they're industrial strength. I absolutely love these things and travel with them constantly.

So those are three. We have chilipad, we have hanging upside down, we have the sleep mask and ear plugs. Next we have tea. I had laughed at my girlfriend because she drank this tea, and I was like oh, that must be very helpful for – at the time – menstrual cramps but I don't really need it. And the branding is very targeted at women. But this is specifically Yogi soothing caramel bedtime tea. It supports a good night's sleep.

Rain forest alliance certified. So it's got a lot going on, here. But Yogi, soothing caramel bedtime tea. I saw this and I remember I was at home alone one night; my girlfriend was out for some reason. I was like oh, I'll have some tea. I don't feel like having anything caffeinated but I want something with flavor. I drank this tea. I let it brew for maybe five minutes and I felt like Leonardo DiCaprio in the pay phone scene from Wolf of Wall Street where he's taken too many quaaludes and it all hits him at once.

I felt like I had been hit with a tranq dart and had to, in the most awkward fashion possible, drag myself to the bedroom, and just go to sleep. I was very impressed by how strong this stuff is. Your mileage may vary. You may find that it seems ridiculously ineffective for you but for whatever reason, this stuff knocks me out even more so than something I used to use, which I think also has applications and that's just straight California poppy that you can put in drops in, say, water.

Alright. So that's the tea. Another option, another brand is something called Sleepytime tea. But this one, to start with, they also have the worst fortunes/mantras on these tags imaginable. I have no idea who they paid in some non native English speaking country to put these together but they are kind of hilarious at times. So Yogi Soothing Caramel Bedtime Tea.

And then last but not least, we have visual overwriting. That's not a term I've heard used but that's the way I think of it. This is what you do right before bed to, in effect, crowd out whatever is replaying in your mind, or whatever you happen to be obsessing about that is going to inhibit sleep. So that could be email, that could be things you have to do the next morning. That could be an argument or debate you had that day.

It could be any number of things. But if you're anything like me, you lay down at night and for whatever reason, that's when your brain decides to rev up. Meditation helps a lot with this. I've talked about my morning routines before, which include meditation so I'm not going to repeat this here. You can listen to that short podcast if you want my morning routines. Meditation helps a lot to dial down the volume and frequency and intensity of this internal chatter at night.

But what also helps very, very much is either playing Tetris for ten minutes, and this can also be applied to PTSD and other things. You can listen to my interview on this podcast with Jane McGonigal on game design and using games for everything from weight loss to mitigating the damage from traumatic brain injury, PTSD, etc. Tetris for ten minutes, I won't get into all the explanation but that can be very, very helpful for the visual overwriting for purposes of sleep.

The other option, which I take advantage of all the time, is short episodic television. I'll give you one particular recommendation. If you've ever dreamed or fantasized – that bell in the background is my puppy doing back flips on the floor for some reason. If you've ever fantasized about just saying fuck it, quitting your job and going back to the land; getting out of the city and going to Montana or going to God knows where in some rural Utopia and tilling the soil and making your own food and whatnot, then *Escape to River Cottage*, Season One is what you have to watch. It's a really, really good episode.

It features the celebrity chef, Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall, most British name ever. Fantastic host, excellent chef and really a good, philosophical exploration and pragmatic reality check of what it means to go from city slicker to farmer, effectively, or homesteader.

It's a really great series. I really enjoyed it. It's very retro in a way that I find endearing, and engaging in away that is sort of modern CGI has lost some of its lure. So those are the five points. I'm not going to make this any longer than it has to be. Chilipad, hanging upside down, the Sleep Master sleep mask with the 3M ear plugs that I mentioned, the Yogi Soothing Caramel Bedtime Tea, and then using some type of visual overwriting, whether that is ten minutes of Tetris before bed on a dimmed screen, don't forget that, or *Escape to River Cottage* Season One, or other episodic television. And if you haven't signed up for Five Bullet Friday, please do that. That's my closing request.

Five Bullet Friday is the little sampling of awesomeness, hopefully; the most interesting things that I have found or experimented with in a given week. And that's a short email with five bullets. It goes out every Friday. You can check that out by going to fourhourworkweek.com/friday. Just go to fourhourworkweek.com, all spelled out, forward slash Friday. Or go to fourhourworkweek.com and just fill out your email there. It's free. Alright, guys. Thanks very much for listening. Until next time, keep up the experimentation, sleep well, and take care.