

WHY CAN'T I SLEEP? BODY CHEMICALS MADE SIMPLE

by Sally Duxfield
Director Makahika OPC
sallyduxfield.com

I'm reasonably shallow (there are puddles deeper than I am) so I love to keep things as light and useful as possible. If you need deep scientific stimulation - "that's two levels down, third aisle on the left and off you go now".

Let's explore Body Chemicals that should be of supreme interest to you. Starting with The Happy One.

Dopamine - associated with happy, smiling, motivation, interest and drive - but it has a dark side.

The big D gives a surge of reinforcing pleasure when achieving our desires and needs. D can be more addictive than alcohol or nicotine - this is the chemical that is released every-time you have an interaction on that addictive social media (it's the gaming persons high - smashing those little red trolls and annihilating planets will do this for you) and when you turn off the computer or I-phone, you'll come screaming down in a clinically 'sad' way, vs. a 'depressive manner'.

Ladies and gentlemen this baby is your teenagers worst nightmare - they are completely and utterly addicted to the dopamine high - stoned off their pubescent, spotty feral faces - isolated in their smelly rooms; icky children spawned by the internet who tell you in the morning that they hate you, (join the queue) and they don't want to live (dopamine crash not depression).

They become assassins and blackmailers when D stoned; be warned even your little ones can be taken over by the D-force. Screen time will bite you – don't be a raging Walloper – get off the screens.



UNICORNS AND SLIPPERS



Serotonin - You feel significant and important when you have high levels of the Big S.

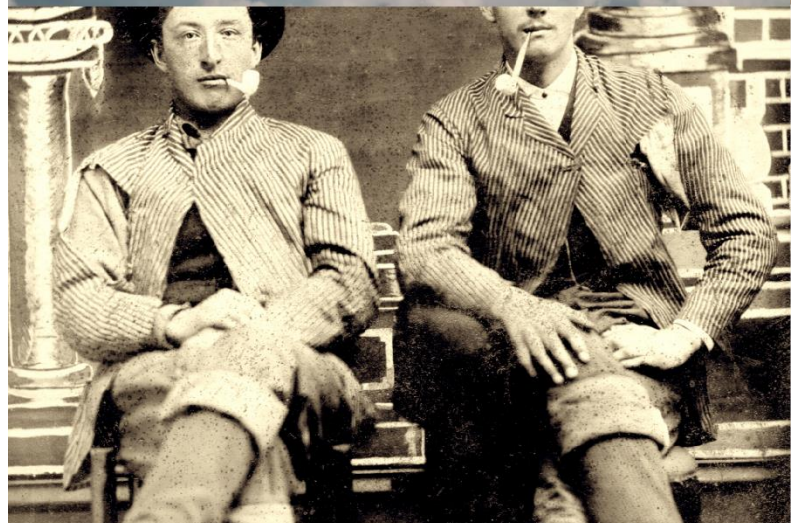
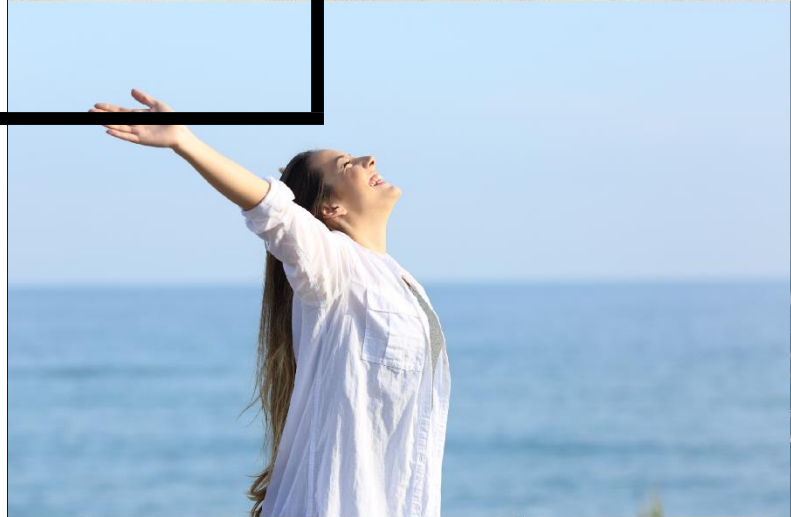
Time for a story:

"The Husband arrives home at 6 pm; the children smell fresh and clean and are pleased to see him, having played outside on the wonderful swing, daddy charmingly hung from the willow tree. His sweet and attentive wife has a little glow on her cheeks and a little pale pink lipstick to highlight her smile. Dinner smells great and will be ready in 20 minutes, just time to take his slippers, his newspaper perhaps, to the peaceful lounge, and unwind from the tremendously busy day he's had as a shoe salesman. Resting in his lazy-boy (faux-suede), feet up, slippers on, reflecting on his day, a deep sense of satisfaction overwhelms him - all is good in his kingdom". And that is Serotonin in a nutshell.

Completely fictional scenario, poor chap is more likely to see unicorns than get his slippers and pipe handed to him, but you get it, right? The Answer then?

Check Lists – start with just this. Daily, ensure that you and the team (home and professional) have a 'written list', not electronic; one where you can tick off the successes of the day and transfer anything not yet achieved to tomorrow's list. When you reflect at the day's end, you have a sense of control and satisfaction. Peacocks will use crayons, owls probably, will type up a spreadsheet and print it off – do what best suits you, but the kinesthetic act of 'ticking' is enough to trigger the end of day Serotonin – and here we come, sleep.

director@makahika.co.nz



END OF DAY ROUTINE - ESSENTIAL

The Big Big M - **Melatonin** - a natural hormone released from a pea-sized gland (laughing) - that is inactive during the day (still laughing). As the sun goes down and darkness occurs the little gland is turned on (stop it).

This fab little gland releases a bucket load of Melatonin and we will begin to feel less alert. The kicker is, that even when the gland is 'turned on', it will not produce Melatonin unless you are in a dimly lit environment.

Why can't I sleep?

(I say again for the screen-addicted Wallopers amongst us).

You have your brains drowned in blue light; screens, computer, TV, phones, artificial lights; the body CANNOT physically produce enough Melatonin, for you to sleep soundly for a 'decent' night's sleep with all of this light 'noise'.

Blue Light and Artificial Light inhibit Melatonin.

Then add a whole cup of Cortisol.

Who wakes between 2 and 3 am, consistently??

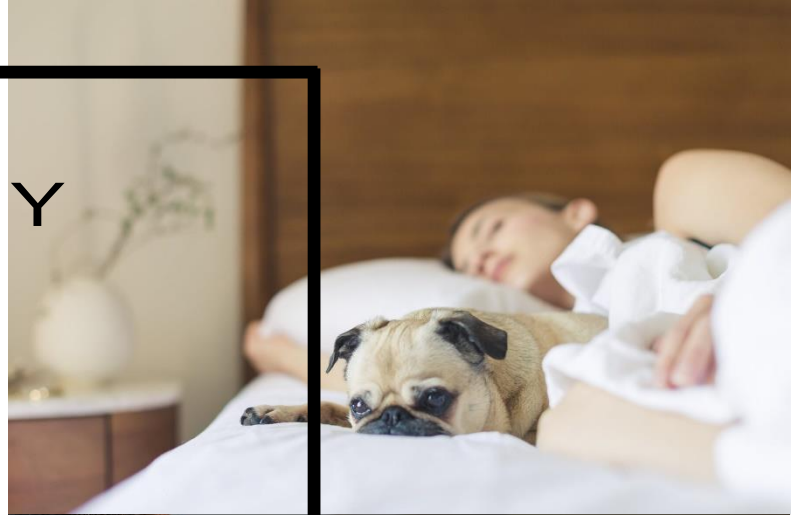
Not enough Melatonin

Can't fall asleep?

Not enough Melatonin

It's not rocket science - you need to have an end of day routine, dim lights, find your rhythm; so too, do the kids!

And make sure that check-list is complete and you're ready for tomorrow – lunches made, bags packed, laptop all tucked up ready to carry out the door – all that grown-up stuff. Put the wine bottles out ☺



NATURAL POISON

Cortisol – the biggest, baddest of them all. The adrenal gland releases Cortisol to respond to stressors during your day - a little is good, too much is bad. Just like Blue light, this bad-boy inhibits the making of Melatonin, your amazing and fantastic sleep drug.

The Reptilian part of the brain releases a jolly good dose of Cortisol to wake us up in the morning and ensure that we can fight Neanderthals or hunt Dinosaurs.

Fantastic! however, because we weren't 'grown-ups' and we didn't sort the lunches the night before, the swimming togs weren't packed, there's no petrol in the car and our feral Dopamine addicted teenagers slept in, we have multiple doses of Cortisol in our system and we're still to tackle the morning commute.

And then, because we raised our voices at our darlings, (remember we weren't grown-ups), we spiked them full of Cortisol and sent them off to be generally horrible to their generally nice teachers (and right now - us), they're horrible to us, stuck COVID'ing at home.

The physiological response to Cortisol is astounding. It puts us into Fight, Flight or Freeze mode; it 'curbs' our periphery vision (Neanderthal ahead - see only 'him'), increases sugar levels (energy to run from 'him'), reduces our hearing (concentrate only on 'him'); 'tunnel vision'.

When you yell or display aggression at another, you trigger their Limbic system - you are dangerous; cortisol floods their system, they can no longer hear or see properly. Read Dr. Ceri Evans "Perform Under Pressure"

Morning Yelling. That went well huh?



SEEK JOY CONTROLLING YOUR STRESS

So how then? Eating the Elephant.

Control what's within your circle of influence. Your speech, your behaviour, how you treat others, how you dress, what you eat - the things that you have direct, daily influence over. Don't be dull – laugh some more; (if you're an Owl you'll most likely have to find a Peacock to help with this).

Depending on your personality, you may worry about things that you cannot control; head down rabbit holes that do not serve you, increasing your cortisol, decreasing your ability to make the good drugs.

With social media, our world can be too big, too scary. It appears to be out of control and this places us in high levels of stress and anxiety... high cortisol, inhibited melatonin, poor sleep, reduced performance, guilt, further increased stress and so on and so on, into the diminishing circle of despair.

Lean in, go right into the itsy-bitsy middle of your circle; limit television, put down your phone; get out of the depths, go shallow, really, really, joyfully shallow. Puddle shallow, like a duck, splash, play, eat worms, think simple thoughts, seek joy in little things.

COVID -19 your reality. To influence your well-being and that of your team, 'choose to seek joy'. Understand the simplicity of body chemicals, form a rhythm to your day, write the damn list. D Stoners & Wallopers step away from the screens, go smiling out into that great big wonderful world and eat that elephant, one little shallow bite at a time.

"Follow your passion. Stay true to yourself. Never follow someone else's path unless you're in the woods and you're lost and you see a path. By all means, you should follow that." Ellen Degeneres.

