

Turning off the chatter for better night's sleep

By Barbara Pidermann

Mental noise can affect the ability to concentrate and often contributes to anxiety. This continuous inner conversation in your head can be particularly bothersome at bedtime or when waking in the middle of the night.

Here are a couple tricks to calm or turn off mental noise when trying to sleep.

1. Plan ahead. Before going to bed, grab a pad of paper and write down anything that is bothering you right then or that you think may be of concern if you wake in the middle of the night. Even the smallest things seem out of proportion at 3am as you toss and turn.

If you do wake up at 3am or have difficulty falling asleep, remind yourself that the list is there, it isn't going anywhere, and you will tackle it in the morning. Say to yourself: "That problem is on the list and I will take care of it in the morning."

2. Tame your monkey mind. Buddha described the human mind as being filled with off-the-wall monkeys jumping around from tree to tree and chattering endlessly. He named it the monkey mind.

To quiet mental noise, try to tame your monkey mind. Befriend your monkey and ask it to complete a task. For example, say to your monkey mind: "Hello monkey, please watch my breathing. Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out." Or put your monkey in charge of progressive relaxation. If your monkey mind is busy with a job assignment, it won't keep chattering.

Practice both techniques. You can do them anytime you need to turn off the mental noise and focus. Sweet dreams.

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