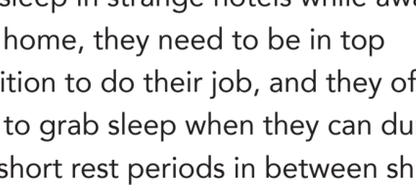




# New Techniques for Insomnia

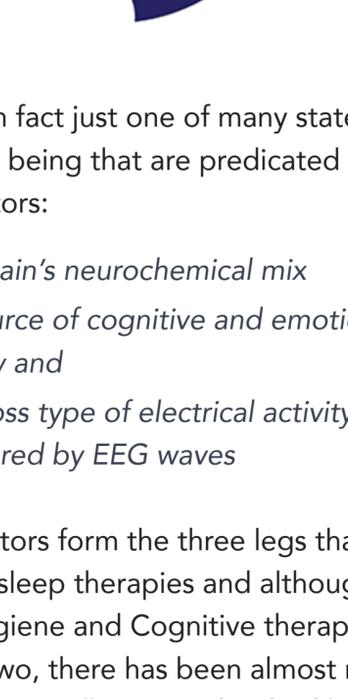
**Our editor talks to Allan Baker, Allan trained as a military pilot in the Royal New Zealand Air Force, and is a registered psychologist. He has had a psychology career spanning over 45 years, and for the past fifteen years has worked exclusively in the field of Aviation Psychology. This has led to his deep understanding and interest in the area of sleep, which is so critical for commercial pilots and air crew.**

**When Allan took on helping international pilots with their sleep problems, he had no idea that the treatments he discovered would lead to his writing a book that would turn the sleep industry on its head.**



Pilots, he says, present a particular challenge; they are nearly always jet-lagged so their sleep clock is disturbed, they sleep in strange hotels while away from home, they need to be in top condition to do their job, and they often have to grab sleep when they can during very short rest periods in between shifts of duty on the flight deck. Allan discovered that a lot of conventional advice couldn't help him or them, and that some of the sleep advice actually stood in the way of progress.

**“In this interview he talks about some of the myths that we should discard and some alternatives therapies that show promise.”**



Sleep is in fact just one of many states of mental being that are predicated by three factors:

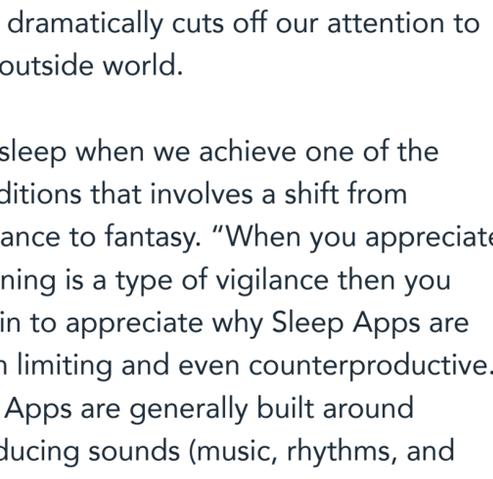
1. *The brain's neurochemical mix*
2. *It's source of cognitive and emotional activity and*
3. *It's gross type of electrical activity as measured by EEG waves*

These factors form the three legs that make up sleep therapies and although Sleep Hygiene and Cognitive therapy fit the first two, there has been almost no work done up till now on the third leg, achieving an EEG state compatible with sleep.

Sleep hygiene approaches exploit the basic fact that for most of us we get sleepy after being awake for 14 hours and if we don't do things that get in the way of this natural process, like being exposed to blue light, avoiding stimulants like caffeine, we should get to sleep.

When it comes to cognitive therapies, Allan argues that Dylan Thomas' advice "Do not go gentle into that good night" reinforces the contrary idea that you do not need to achieve a gentle mind to get to sleep. Mental calmness he says is not a pre-requisite for sleep.

**“It turns out that it is not mental activity, or a busy mind itself that prevents sleep; but to what that mental activity is directed.”**



You can in fact go to sleep with a busy mind so long as that activity is directed by internal fantasy rather than external vigilance.

In controlling our thinking in trying to get to sleep what we are really trying to do is to close a type of gate in the Thalamus that dramatically cuts off our attention to the outside world.

We sleep when we achieve one of the conditions that involves a shift from vigilance to fantasy. "When you appreciate listening is a type of vigilance then you begin to appreciate why Sleep Apps are both limiting and even counterproductive. The Apps are generally built around producing sounds (music, rhythms, and words) with the promise that they will lull you into a calm state, and then sleep will take over—you need do nothing but listen."

However, the act of listening serves to keep the brain vigilant. It requires that we use our concentration to attend to the sounds; the moment we stop attending our minds tend to wander. Preventing that wandering requires that we interact with the sounds or stories.

"When I began the serious business of assisting international pilots with achieving better sleep, I had to set aside the calmness goal. The goal was to enable a pilot to come off their shift and get to sleep quickly to maximise the two to three hours they had available. Setting aside that mental calmness goal freed me to explore very new and liberating paradigms for achieving sleep. I was able to treat inducing sleep as an active process, as a type of specific skill that could be acquired by practice."



"These skills utilise the fact that the brain's electrical activity as measured by EEG shows a very dramatic change from relatively high frequency Alpha waves to a much slower pattern of regular wave activity called Delta waves. Certain mental activity greatly increases the onset of these delta waves and is the most significant breakthrough in the new sleep techniques."

A sample chapter from Alan's Bakers book is available for free download from the mySleepSwitch website at: [www.mysleepswitch.com](http://www.mysleepswitch.com)

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