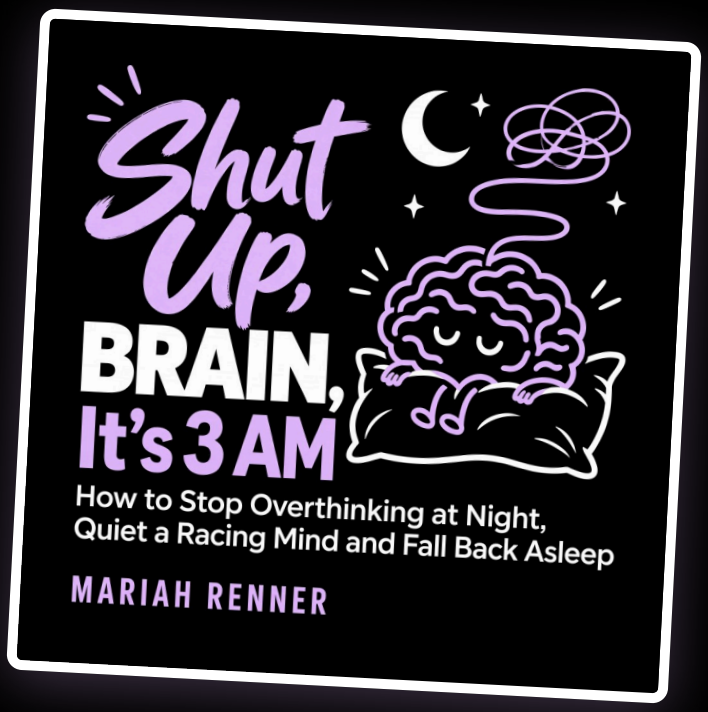
For the nights your brain won't stop drafting



THE PRINTABLE COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

The three moves on one map, a heavy and warm card, the night thoughts card, a word list, the It's okay if I'm awake card, a 3 AM plan card, a two-minute brain dump page and a Sunday night rhythm card.

The NIGHT BRAIN Kit



For Shut Up, Brain, It's 3 AM

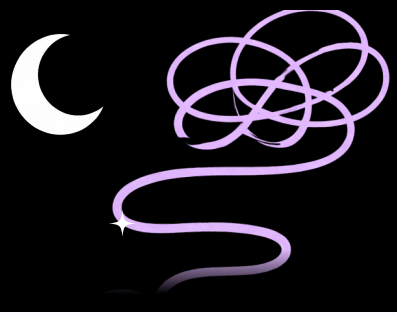
How to Stop Overthinking at Night, Quiet a Racing Mind and Fall Back Asleep

MARIAH RENNER

SET IT UP IN DAYLIGHT. KEEP IT BY THE BED. FREE TO PRINT.

START HERE · FOR DAYLIGHT, WITH A COFFEE

Set it up in daylight



It was made to be heard in bed, in the dark, with your eyes closed. You don't need to remember anything. So everything the book teaches is here on paper, for the daytime. **A little setup in daylight makes the nights easier**, and then the night asks nothing of you.

How to use this kit

1. Print it, cut out the cards and fill in the blanks on an ordinary afternoon. Nothing here is homework.
2. But they aren't three boxes to tick before you're allowed to sleep. Nobody is checking.
3. A move that makes you tense isn't the right move for tonight.
4. You don't have to do every step. And if you've only got one of them in you, one is plenty.
5. For the night itself, play the bonus track, the wind-down. It's for lying down only.

ON THE FRIDGE

The Lower, Label, Let go map and the Sunday night rhythm card.

BY THE BED

The heavy and warm card, the night thoughts card, the It's okay if I'm awake card and the 3 AM plan card.

BY THE COFFEE MAKER

The brain dump page, folded in half, where it waits for you in the morning.

Some parts are guided, with slow pauses. If you're driving, just listen, and try the guided parts once you've parked. When something can't wait, the help note on page 14 comes first.

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TOOL 1 OF 8 · FOR THE FRIDGE

The Lower, Label, Let go map



There are three moves. I call them Lower, Label and Let go. They come in a useful order, because a softer body quiets the alarm a little, and a quieter alarm makes it easier to name a thought without getting pulled into it.

Lower

Lower is about softening your body, gently, without forcing it.

A TASTE

Your shoulders sink into the mattress a little. Your hands open.

FOR THE WATCHMAN

Lower gives the watchman less to run on, so a coat on a hook can go back to being a coat.

Label

Label is about putting a simple name on a thought so you can stop drafting it.

A TASTE

Labeling might be one plain word for what's happening. Drafting. That's it.

FOR THE WATCHMAN

Label is the raised eyebrow the empty room is missing: one small word, Drafting or Rehearsal, and you get a little of the outside view.

Let go

Let go is about dropping sleep as a task, so you can stop chasing it.

A TASTE

Letting go might be the moment you decide that lying here, warm and still, counts as rest.

FOR THE WATCHMAN

Let go stops you checking whether you're asleep yet, which is just one more thing for him to report.

UNDER ALL THREE

Noted. No vote.

The watchman isn't your enemy. You can thank him for the report and leave it on the desk until morning.

"No vote" is for the drafting, never for something that truly needs you now.

SOME NIGHTS

Some nights you'll use one. Some nights two, or all three, or none. And if any of them starts a fight with you, skip it.

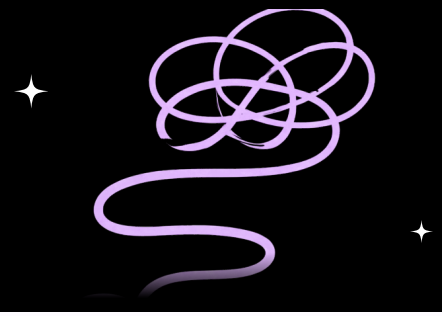
ALL OF IT, IN ONE BREATH

Lower, label, let go. Let the bed hold you, give a thought a word or none, and let sleep stop being a task. That's all of it.

The thought isn't bigger. The alarm is just louder.



Noted. No vote.



When your brain starts drafting, whether it's an email, a speech, a text or a careful explanation to someone who isn't even awake, say silently to yourself:

Noted. No vote.

That's all. You don't argue with the draft. You don't fix the wording. You don't finish the sentence.

Who gets the vote

So nothing it says at 3 AM gets a vote. It can talk. It can be loud. It can draft as many emails as it likes. But it doesn't get to decide anything. Decisions belong to the rested, daytime version of you, whenever your day begins, the one who can see the whole picture.

The limit, always

"No vote" is for the drafting, never for something that truly needs you now. A child who needs you, smoke, a frightening symptom: the help note on page 14 wins, every time.

Make the map yours

Fill it in on a calm day, then put the map on the fridge.

Lower. Where I start softening: _____

jaw · shoulders · hands · heels · the mattress under my back

Label. My plain word for the drafting: _____

Drafting · Replay · Work stuff · that again

Let go. The sentence that takes sleep off the list: _____

The draft my night brain writes most: _____

You don't have to be good at any of this.

Then leave it right where it is, mid-sentence, and let the bed do the holding.



TOOL 2 OF 8 · FOR THE BED

The heavy and warm card



Heavy and warm. You don't make them heavy. You just notice that they already have weight, and you stop holding it up. Cut the card out and keep it by the bed.

FRONT

Heavy and warm.

Heels heavy.
Hands held.
Out.



BACK · THE LONGER OUT-BREATH

Breathe in for four. Breathe out for six.

The numbers are just a handrail. What matters is the out-breath taking a little longer than the in-breath.

If counting your breaths makes you more anxious, stop counting.

Instead, turn your attention to where your back meets the mattress.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots One side faces you, one faces the wall

FRONT · TWO SNEAKY PLACES

Jaw

Are your teeth touching? If they are, let a tiny gap open between them. Your lips can stay closed.

Shoulders

Letting them go heavy is like telling a security guard the store is closed. He can go home now.

BACK · START LOW, KEEP IT LIGHT

Legs often give up their weight more easily than arms, so if your hands won't go heavy, start at the bottom of the bed instead.

If warmth feels too much on a hot night, skip it. Heavy alone is plenty.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

When something gets in the way

FEELING SILLY

But here's the truth: nobody is watching you. It's dark. Your bedroom has no audience.

YOUR MIND WANDERING

That's not a failure. That's what minds do. Just: Oh, I wandered. Back to the bed.

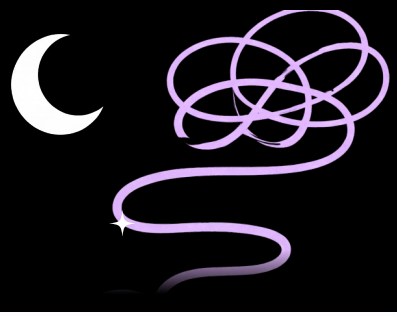
FEELING NOTHING

That's fine. Lower doesn't need a feeling to count.

If you're driving, just listen for now, and try it once you've parked.

TOOL 3 OF 8 · FOR THE BED

The night thoughts card



Night thoughts tend to come in a few familiar shapes. Here are the ones I meet most often. You'll probably recognize a few of your regulars.

FRONT · THE REGULARS

The Replay	This one reruns today's conversations, frame by frame.
The Rehearsal	The Rehearsal looks forward. It scripts tomorrow.
The Disaster Movie	This one plays the worst possible ending, with surround sound.
The Inventory	This is the clipboard thought.
The Big Questions	And then, sometime after three, the philosophy department opens.

BACK · ONE WORD, THEN STOP DRAFTING

No worry gets solved after midnight.

There's no answer key. Any rough word works. It just needs to be a word you can say instead of answering.

If choosing a label starts its own debate, skip labeling entirely.

Bored. Polite. Unbothered.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

The voice for your labels

Think of a receptionist at a busy office, one who's been doing the job for years. "Yes, I have you. Take a seat."

Not a bouncer. Not a judge. A receptionist on a slow Tuesday afternoon.

If it comes back fifteen times, you give it the same word fifteen times.

My regulars and my words

"Replay." "Worry." "Email." "Work stuff." "Mom." Even just "that again."

The one that visits most: _____

My word for it: _____

The second regular: _____

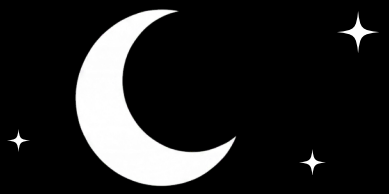
My word for it: _____

NOTICED LATE? The moment you notice is the moment you label. Oh. Drafting. **Noticing late still counts.**

And some nights, the only word you need is "drafting." Oh. I'm drafting. That's enough.



The cognitive shuffle word list



You think of random, unrelated, harmless words, one at a time. For each word, you briefly picture it. Just a quick image. Then you let it go and move to the next.

How it works

The trick is that the words don't connect. There's no chain to keep track of, no story building up.

If a word drags something heavy in with it, a person's name, a work project, skip it and grab the next object that comes to mind.

Boring is exactly what a tired brain needs at this hour.

Rather not choose?

And if you'd rather not choose words at all, you don't have to. I'll give you some.

The lilac slips are the book's own words. The rest are more of the same: plain, everyday, nothing to follow.

✂ Cut the slips apart, keep a few in a cup by the bed, or just read the list in daylight

Lemon	Bicycle	Cloud	Slipper	Pinecone	Teacup
Feather	Doorknob	Snow	Spoon	Carrot	Sponge
Button	Kettle	Pebble	Mitten	Acorn	Towel
Marble	Saucer	Umbrella	Pear	Basket	Seashell
Leaf	Ribbon	Bowl	Cork	Peach	Whisk
Scarf	Thimble	Radish	Sailboat	Walnut	Apricot

My own plain words

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

No words tonight?

Then do something dull right there: run through random words, or spell the names of kitchen things slowly in your head. **S, p, o, o, n.**

A thought can stay loud without an answer.

If you're driving, just listen for now, and try it once you've parked.

It’s okay if I’m awake card



You take sleep off the to-do list for the night. Not forever. Just for tonight, just for now.

FRONT · SAY IT SILENTLY

It’s okay if I’m awake for a while.

I’m allowed to just lie here.

BACK · HOW TO USE IT

You don’t have to believe it the first time.
Say it anyway, the way you’d hum a tune you only half remember.

You can say it more than once.

And you can make it your own. I can be awake for now. Nothing has to happen yet.

Mine: _____

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

The three giveaways · If you notice any of them, you’ve probably slipped into trying.

CHECKING

Checking whether you’re asleep yet. This is the big one.

TENSING

Tensing to hold a “relaxed” position. Real rest lets you shift.

GRADING

Grading yourself. Any score at all, even a kind one, means the exam is still running.

When you catch one of the giveaways, you don’t need to scold yourself. Scolding is just more grading.

You can rest without the goal of sleeping.

I’m not going to tell you rest is the same as sleep. What I will say is that lying still and resting feels very different from lying still and wrestling.

There’s nothing to report back, and no one waiting for a result.

My version, in my own words

Pick words that feel like letting out a breath, and keep them.

_____

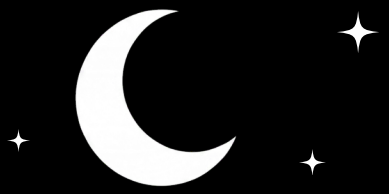
_____

The giveaway I catch most: _____

You’re just a person lying in a bed in the dark. That’s allowed.



The 3 AM plan card



Here's the plan. It works at any minute of the night, the second you wake or forty minutes in, phone already glowing. It's never too late to rest.

FRONT · THE PLAN

1. Lock the screen and lay the phone face-down on the floor beside the bed.
2. If your eyes are open, you can close them now.
3. Let one breath out run long. Or, if breathing feels fussy tonight, just feel the mattress under your back.
4. If a thought is there, give it a word, if that's easy. Work. Replay. Money.
5. And give yourself permission to be awake. It's okay if I'm awake for a while.

BACK · START FROM HERE

I saw a number. It's not my business.

You don't have to do every step. Start with whichever one you're at, and stop wherever you like. Nothing went wrong. Pick any step and start again.

If something real needs you, see to it, then start from here.

Company more than explanation? Play the bonus track, the wind-down.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots It lives face-down next to the phone

That little itch to look again

So when you feel that little itch in your hand, try naming it. Checking. You don't have to fight the itch.

Morning is the clock's job. Your alarm will tell you when it's time to get up. Until then, you're off duty.

Already looked?

That's all right. You haven't lost the night. Nothing you've done so far tonight has ruined anything.

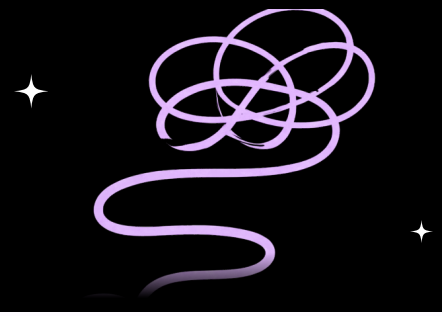
You start from here. From wherever you are right now, with whatever you've already done.

ONE RULE **If a good while goes by, and sleep isn't coming, get up.** Roughly fifteen or twenty minutes, judged by your own rough sense of it. Never by the clock. What to do then is on the next page.

Whatever you've looked at, whatever math you've done, you start from here.



Set up the room in daylight



Some of this is easier to sort out in daylight, before you get into bed. None of these are rules. Find the version that works for you.

The room, once

- [ ] **Turn the clock away.** Face it toward the wall. Your alarm will still go off.
- [ ] **Give the phone a spot.** If it's playing this book, its home is face-down on the floor beside the bed. If it isn't, charge it across the room, where you'd have to get up to reach it.
- [ ] **Make an agreement with yourself.** Decide, while you're brushing your teeth, that the time at night is none of your business.
- [ ] **Look around the room for other little lights, too.** Turning them away from the bed, or a small piece of tape over the dot, sorts most of them out.
- [ ] Keep a sweater or a robe by the bedroom door, so you're not standing in a cold room getting more alert by the second.

When you get up: something dull

So go to another room. Keep the lights dim. A small lamp, not the big overhead light.

- [ ] Fold socks.
- [ ] Read the manual for an appliance you don't own.
- [ ] Sit on the floor and look at the pattern in a rug.

My dull thing: _____

Then, when you start to feel sleepy, the heavy-eyelid, slow-blink sort of sleepy, go back to bed.

No other room?

Not everyone has another room to go to. That's fine. The point isn't the other room. The point is a small change, so the bed isn't where you lie awake.

If there's a chair in your room, sit in it with a blanket over your knees for a while. Or stay in bed and sit up against the headboard with a pillow behind you.

My smaller change: _____

That isn't failing. It's the rule doing its job.

If sleep still doesn't come after another good while, you can do the same thing again. You're just changing position for a bit, and letting sleepiness find you somewhere else.

And before lights-out tonight, if you'd like a small start, turn the clock to face the wall.



TOOL 7 OF 8 · BEFORE BED, PRINT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE

The two-minute brain dump page



That's what the brain dump is for. It takes about two minutes.

Before bed, get out a pen and some paper. Write down tomorrow's tasks and any loose ends rattling around in your head.

THE LEVEL OF POLISH

Call dentist.
Email Sarah re: Thursday.
Milk, trash bags.
That thing with the car??

This isn't a document. It's a place to put things down.

Then you close the notebook. And the shift is over.

Then fold the paper in half and leave it on the counter next to the coffee maker, where it'll be waiting for you in the morning.

AT THE TOP

Pick one good thing for tomorrow morning, and make it specific. Write it at the top of your brain-dump paper, above all the tasks, so it's the first thing you see when you pick that paper up with your coffee.

ONE GOOD THING FOR TOMORROW MORNING

TOMORROW'S TASKS AND LOOSE ENDS

FROM THE NIGHT: ONE LINE AND A TIME

Then close it.

Somewhere to set the tray down



What it needs is somewhere to set the tray down. You're not planning tomorrow. You're not putting things in order or working out how long they'll take. You're just getting them out of your head and onto the paper.

ON THE PAPER

The list is for things you can actually do something about. Calls, emails, errands, the form, the car. Things with a next step.

NOT ON THE PAPER

It isn't for every worry that circles back. The replay of a conversation, the big question about your career, the fourth rerun of the thing your sister said.

In the night: one line and a time

Write one short line. Dentist. Not a plan, not the steps, not how you'll word it. You can scrawl it in the dark. Then put the pen down.

Slide 14 vs appendix, check at 7:30. Seven words. A time. Nothing else.

Real, and tomorrow.

Ask one simple question: Is there something here I can actually do? If there is, it gets a line on the paper and a time.

Ten minutes that are yours

That hunger is real. It isn't laziness. Find ten minutes of real me-time earlier in the evening. But ten counts. The length of one cup of tea counts.

My ten minutes: _____

What can give a little: _____

A gentle landing

The same small set of things in the same order each night: brain dump, teeth, lamp.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Why paper. A piece of paper can't take you anywhere. It just sits there being paper. Any paper works. It doesn't need to be nice.

The waiter can finally put down the tray.



TOOL 8 OF 8 · FOR THE FRIDGE, EVERY SUNDAY

The Sunday night rhythm card



Sunday comes every week. So it helps to have a small, steady rhythm for it. Here's the one I use. Three pieces.

FRONT · THREE PIECES

1. **An earlier brain dump.**
   Do it after dinner, while you still have some daytime energy.
2. **A softer last hour.**
   Lower lights. Nothing that asks you to decide anything.
3. **One small, pleasant thing planned for Monday morning. Just one.**
   A pastry from the good bakery near the station.

BACK · WHEN THE DREAD ARRIVES

Tomorrow might be hard. I don't have to live it tonight.

Does this need me right now, in the dark?

For worries, rehearsals, plans and most loose ends, the answer is no. And if something truly needs you now, act.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

My Sunday

My earlier brain dump, after: _____

My softer last hour: _____

My one small, pleasant thing: _____

A busy Monday morning?

And if your Monday morning is getting kids dressed, fed and out the door, it can be smaller still. Your coffee in the mug you like, drunk while it's hot, before anyone else is up.

The night before a big day

A rough night is unpleasant. It isn't a verdict. The night isn't the test. It's just the night.

On a high-stakes night, the three moves work the same as always: lower, label, let go, in that order if it helps. And if you've only got one of them in you, one is plenty.

Tonight, you're just a person in a bed. You get to live the night you're actually in, not the day you're worried about.

TO CLOSE · KEEP THIS PAGE

When it can’t wait, and the kit page



When it can’t wait. Everything in this book about putting thoughts off until morning is about worry: the replays, the rehearsals, the emails you draft in your head. It was never meant for something that needs you right now.

If a child needs you, go to them. If you smell smoke, or there’s real danger in the house, act on it. If you or someone at home has a frightening symptom, such as chest pain or trouble breathing, call your local emergency number. That’s 911 in the US. Don’t wait to see if it passes.

If you might harm yourself, or you don’t feel you can stay safe tonight, don’t wait for morning. In the US, you can call or text 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at any hour.

If you’re struggling to keep your eyes open, don’t drive, don’t use power tools, and don’t climb ladders. A foggy meeting is fine. A drowsy driver is not.

Sometimes, trouble sleeping is more than a busy mind. And if that’s the case for you, getting it checked is a strong move. It’s not a failure. If hard nights keep going for weeks, or your days are suffering, talk to a doctor. This kit shares everyday ideas for quieter nights. It isn’t medical advice, and I’m not a doctor.

THE KIT PAGE, FREE

kalderno.com/nightbrain

Scan it to get this kit again or to print a fresh copy. If the book helped you, a rating on Spotify helps the next listener find it.

Not nights without thoughts, but nights where the thoughts don’t get to run the place.

Mariah



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