



The British Club of the Taunus Magazine

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GREETINGS



In accordance with our "Sleep, Rest and Mindfulness" issue, I started this year resting due to a painful little toe, which I broke by running into the door of our kitchen on New Year's as I went to refill our champagne glasses. It was as if my 2022 had set its theme very early on: Take it SLOW!

Note that I'm not a hectic person in the first place. If I was to be placed on a remote island and could take three things with me, it would probably be my hammock, yoga mat, and super comfy four poster bed. I'm definitely not ashamed to say: I love a good sleep and rest, and I make sure I get it! However, my mindset hasn't always been this way.

It started some years ago, when I painfully learned that my body could run out of energy, and a heart disease forced me to rest in bed for months. After years of successfully running through my (work) life, that felt very strange. At that time, mindfulness was a foreign concept to me. If anything, my mind was always on the go, which was probably the reason for my break down. I had not known that taking time to recharge was essential to living. Even though it is the most natural thing to do! Even mother nature and animals rest themselves in Winter; they go to sleep in order to regain energy for another season to come.

While traveling in Asia, I observed cultures that respect this natural instinct. In China it is perfectly acceptable for everyone to take a nap around mid-day, from street cleaners to office workers. The concept of Yin and Yang, in this case, the complementary actions of work and rest, was perfectly integrated in everyday life. A yoga teacher made the lesson even clearer with a practical question: If you are on a journey somewhere in your car, what do you do when you see your tank is running low in fuel? Are you going to drive until you break down or are you going to stop in time for a refill to make sure you get to your destination?

After my recovery I started learning about self-care. First, I needed to listen to my body and its needs in order to learn what I enjoyed doing to keep my body, mind and spirit happy and light. Then came the hardest step: Doing it! It was (and still is) hard, especially as a mom, to tell my family, "Sorry everyone, it's time for ME now. I need to recharge."

At first I could not shake that slight feeling of guilt, but with time I learned to put my well-being first. As a result, everyone around me felt the benefit from energy that I was able to share again afterwards. I learned to re-label this priority in my head: instead of thinking of myself as selfish, I recognized my need for self-LOVE.

Nowadays, I dedicate time for little daily rituals like a small yoga session in the morning and a nap in my hammock for 15 minutes after lunch. And there is nothing like a hot bath with a glass of red wine on hand to close the day, especially in Winter. I also make sure to have regular "ME" days where I take time for a massage, write down my thoughts or just do whatever I feel like doing. Over time I learned that no one gets hurt if I push never-ending to-do lists aside once in a while.

Trust me - the world does not collapse if you press the PAUSE button. It is essential that we take breaks, that we plan time for enjoyment, for resting, for sleeping. The more we practice this, the more mindful and in touch with our hearts we become.

It is when we are in touch with our very core, our very essence, that we let our light shine into the world.

- Angelika Lincoln



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WHAT'S NEW

EVENING BOOK CLUB

8th February, 7pm

The Silence of the Girls by Pat Barker.

"The ancient city of Troy has withstood a decade under siege of the powerful Greek army, which continues to wage bloody war over a stolen woman—Helen. In the Greek camp, another woman—Briseis—watches and waits for the war's outcome. She was queen of one of Troy's neighboring kingdoms, until Achilles, Greece's greatest warrior, sacked her city and murdered her husband and brothers. Briseis finds herself in an unprecedented position, able to observe the two men driving the Greek army in what will become their final confrontation, deciding the fate not only of Briseis's people but also of the ancient world at large."

Our book for March is The Dalai Lama's Cat by David Michie.

MORNING BOOK CLUB

10th February

Our book this month is Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell.

"A deeply moving fictionalized story of Shakespeare's family life and the devastating death of his son, Hamnet, which led four years later to the play considered by many to be his greatest work. Shakespeare himself remains mostly unnamed in the book: the main character is his herbalist wife Agnes, who had to cope with her playwright husband's long absences in London. This is a vividly atmospheric book, written with great empathy."

Our book for March is Where Angels Fear to Tread by E. M. Forster.



PHOTO BY TOBIAS REICH ON UNSPLASH

Theme for our March Issue:

Our theme for March is History in Frankfurt and the Taunus, so get your pens ready and articles out by February 15!

We often take the familiar for granted and forget that where we live holds so many stories of the past. The landmarks we pass on a daily basis, the markings on the streetlamps and even the old towns we walk through - all these were part of someone's life before it became a part of ours. What rich or mysterious tales can be learned if we just dig a little deeper? Share what historical tidbits you know about your part of Frankfurt and the Taunus! If you have pictures, all the better. Please send all contributions to magazine@british-club.de.

Future magazine themes include:

April - Microcosm/ Gardening/ Nature

June/July - All About My Town

If you would like to join the magazine's editorial team, please drop us a line! We are always looking for new talent.

BCT Charity Quilt

Calling all sewers (or those who wish to learn): As many of you already know, I have been sewing Heart Pillows since 2010. And guess what, I have quite a large (ok, enormous!) amount of scrap fabric just begging to be sewn into something beautiful!

My cunning plan is to get as many of you as possible to sew me a square or two or three... and the resulting quilt will be raffled for whatever charity the BCT is supporting at the time we eventually finish. Obviously I will provide the coloured scraps, and we could make a double-sided quilt with even more coloured fabric. I would also finance any fancy quilting needing done. It depends on what pattern we choose.

Covid rules permitting, I propose we arrange a meeting at my flat in Hofheim sometime at the beginning of March and make a decision as to what we actually want to do. Below are a few links to give you an idea of what I'm talking about. Feel free to send me your own suggestions. Pinterest is just great for inspiration:

<https://www.diaryofaquilter.com/scrap-quilt-ideas>
<https://beeinmybonnetco.blogspot.com/2019/08/vintage-block-along-week-30-leftovers.html?m=1>
<http://sewyummy.ca/steps-quilt-a-finish/>
<http://www.thequiltingland.com/2018/09/20-free-scrap-quilt-patterns.html>

Please contact me if you are interested in participating - I can show you how easy it is! It can be sewn by hand or machine - I do have an extra machine that I can lend out if necessary. I also have an AccuQuiltGo! cutting machine and can cut squares and triangles ready for sewing - so you have no excuse. I'd love to hear from you!

- Alison Ward



UNESCO World Heritage - Great Spa Towns of Europe

A world of elegance - taking the waters in beautiful towns where people have come, often for centuries, for healing therapies - all this, and more, was recognized by the inclusion of eleven towns from seven countries in the UNESCO World Heritage List on 24 July 2021 - the Great Spa Towns of Europe.

Each town or city, with its own particular atmosphere, has contributed to the European tradition of spa towns. Extending from Bath, in the UK, to the Bohemian spa triangle in the present-day Czech Republic, this nomination for the List proved once again that international co-operation could work successfully.

The European spa culture developed from the 18th century until the 1930s, leading to the development of internationally renowned resorts, with grand, elegant buildings. The spa infrastructure including baths, drinking halls, pump rooms and colonnades was designed to make the best use of mineral water resources for bathing and drinking. The resorts also provided suitable accommodation for guests in prestigious hotels and guest houses with restaurants and often music and dancing.

The Great Spa Towns have several key elements which make them outstanding, such as exceptional spa architecture and the recreational aspect of parks, gardens, promenades, casinos and sports facilities. Spa towns remain popular today with their emphasis on physical and mental health and well-being.

In our area Bad Ems is the easiest town to reach. Situated approximately 50km north of Frankfurt in a narrow part of the valley of the River Lahn, the main spa quarter is on the banks of the river. Known as the "Imperial Spa", it became one of the most important spa towns in Germany. Baden-Baden on the edge of the Black Forest was visited by the ruling and cultural elite of Europe in the nineteenth century, while the Bavarian town of Bad Kissingen is an outstanding example of the reform era of the early twentieth century. These were also places for social gatherings, to "see and be seen".

The complete list of the Great Spa Towns of Europe, including descriptions and pictures on the dedicated website show some beautiful aspects of these towns:
<https://www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu>

- Barbara Neuhaus



HEATHER'S ANECDOTES

Heather's back - with a new column of her thoughts, musings and observations. What better way to kickstart Feel Good February than with a dose of wit and humour from

I saw it and immediately fell in love with it. A winter jacket, or parka and it was in my absolute favourite colour, orange. It was so lightweight and easy to wear. Of course, I bought it. At home I discovered why it was so light (I had expected it to be down filled). But it was filled with "solar balls". I had never heard of those so read further. 'The innovative solar ball technology stores body heat and also converts solar energy into heat. Solar-ball material develops warmth in seconds under sunlight through vibration and collision of its special nano-chemicals.' What a mind-boggling idea. But I do see a downside to all this. Suppose I wear the jacket outside and there is no sun. Do I freeze? Or, alternatively, I wear the jacket outside, and the sun is shining like mad. Do all the solar balls start jumping up and down creating energy? In that case, I would be jumping up and down with them. Up to now, the jacket solar balls have behaved themselves and all was quiet with the filling; however, the weather has been rather cloudy, grey and misty. If you see a little old lady jumping around in the street it might possibly be me in my solar ball parka!

Some of you may have already experienced this, with Christmas and parcels coming from hither and thither. I had a parcel coming from thither, actually, Canada. I received a note saying I had a parcel to pick up at the post office. After a search the post worker found the parcel and then told me that I had to pay 16.59 Euros. "What," I said, "why?" Because of the customs duty, she told me. I knew what the parcel contained: one calendar with owl photos and one calendar with paintings from the Canadian naïve painter, Maud Lewis. Since when do we have to pay customs duty on paper calendars? Well, apparently, last year a new regulation came into force that said, anything coming from abroad has to be taxed. Soon after this, my Canadian friend sent an email saying she had seen a small Christmas ornament that she knew I would like and was sending to me. Oh no, I thought, another visit to the post office. Yes, indeed, and this time it was 11 Euro to pay. It really isn't the money I mind, it is the ridiculous fact that the customs duty is often more than the present.

Now here is a word that I had never heard of before but would love to use one of these days:

Serein: fine rain falling after sunset from a sky in which no clouds are visible.

Naturally, I know of Stonehenge, and I also know it is an ancient monument, but I never really thought about exactly how old it was. It amazed me when I read that it was constructed about 4,500 years ago at around the same time as the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt. Although the locations of both Stonehenge and the Great Pyramid of Giza are thousands of miles apart, both had a common aim: to bring people, materials, objects, and ideas together to create such works of human endeavour. Without our modern technology and machines, those people constructed the most amazing edifices.

These are the options I had when I completed a survey recently.

Man

Woman

Non-binary or gender

Non-conforming

Prefer not to say

Don't know.

I feel really sorry for the person who answers with the last option.

I really try to keep up with all the acronyms ...but sometimes I get overloaded. I kept seeing the acronym NFT and finally I decided to do something about my lack of knowledge. Do you know what it is short for? Well, be my guest:

'At a very high level, most NFTs are part of the Ethereum blockchain. Ethereum is a cryptocurrency, like bitcoin or dogecoin, but its blockchain also supports these NFTs, which store extra information that makes them work differently from, say, an ETH coin. It is worth noting that other blockchains can implement their own versions of NFTs.' I really felt quite faint after I ploughed my way through the paragraph and at the end, I was no wiser. There are some acronyms that one should not investigate. I can live my life very happily without NFTs.

DAY TRIPS FROM FRANKFURT:

MICHELSTADT

Text and photos by John Weston



Now that the Christmas and New Year festivities are behind us, attention can be turned on a sunny winter's day to a day trip out to somewhere of interest not too far from Frankfurt. The Odenwald is an attractive range of hills that extends over the German states of Hesse, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. The region has beautiful landscapes and several interesting towns. Michelstadt is one of these with many delightful old buildings and quaint cobblestone streets.

Michelstadt is situated in the middle of the Odenwald and can be reached by car from Darmstadt or Dieburg and then by passing via Gross-Umstadt and Höchst im Odenwald. For those that travel by train, Michelstadt has a station, served by trains from Frankfurt, which is just a few minutes' walk from the town centre. An enjoyable and well-signed bike ride from Bad König can be made to Michelstadt and Erbach when the weather is favourable.

The first mention of Michelstadt dates from 741 A.D. when Prince Carloman (Charlemagne's uncle) donated the royal estate to Saint Boniface's pupil Burchard, the first Bishop of Würzburg. Thus it is one of the oldest settlements in the Odenwald. In 815 A.D. the estate was donated once again. As a reward for his great merit at Charlemagne's court, Charlemagne's biographer Einhard acquired the main town and all land within two leagues (roughly 15 km) as a freehold from Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious. In times of conflict the Frankish Baronial Castle served as a refuge. In the 17th century, the first houses outside the town wall were built. In 1773, a new town gate was built, called the Neutor ("New Gate"). In the 19th century, the gate towers were all dismantled one after the other.

The town is located at the crossing of two old trade roads, one from Frankfurt to Augsburg and the other from, Worms to Würzburg. Michelstadt owes its wealth to trade, farming

and to industry as a centre for ivory carving, cloth weaving and dyeing and centuries-old ironworking. Ivory carving was a starting point for businesses in the souvenir industry and later plastics processing. South of Michelstadt is Erbach, well worth a visit in its own right, is the centre of ivory (Elfenbein) carving in Germany and has an interesting Ivory Museum and a baroque castle. There are many souvenir shops selling ivory goods for visitors and tourists in both towns (if they have survived the pandemic).

Michelstadt contains many historic timber frame houses and has a real medieval feel. The most popular building for photographers in the market place is the half-timbered Rathaus, built in the Gothic style. It has achieved fame by appearing on a German postage stamp. Built in 1484 it is one of the oldest oak-beamed buildings in Germany. The town hall's main floor served from the beginning as a market hall and was built using old jettied. The east wall was originally part of the graveyard wall, upon which the ground floor's upper load-bearing beam was laid. Who the master builder was is not known. Close by is the Gothic church (Pfarrkirche St Michael) which is also very old. Started in 1461, it was completed in 1491. The nave's columns and the two aisles' walls were built in 1475. The choir dates from 1461 but the antechoir's north wall is much older, from the Carolingian period. The church contains the tombs of the Counts of Erbach from the 14th century. Within the town walls is the Kellerhof, which is built on a Roman settlement and has been refurbished in a Renaissance style. It houses the Odenwald Museum and also a Toy Museum (open from 1st March every day except Mondays). Also within the town walls is the Diebsturm (Thief's tower) which is often falsely described as a keep in tourist guides, but in fact was just part of the town defences and in the 19th century served as a prison. There is an historic mill (Museumsmühle) dating from 1420 which can be visited. An 18th Century Synagogue can be visited too - one of the few that survived the burning of synagogues during Kristallnacht in 1938.





Concerning town events the town is proud of its culture, with many concert evenings, festivals and even an open air theatre. Michelstadt has a wonderful Christmas market set in the town's medieval streets. It also hosts an Easter Market. When we were there, human-sized statues of Easter Rabbits were playing musical instruments in front of the historic town hall. This year's market is scheduled to take place on March 21 and 22. A Bee Market is held each year at Whitsun.

Any visit to Michelstadt should include a visit to the Einhardsbasilika, in the Steinbach part of the town, a church built between 824 and 827 by Einhard. It is one of the very few Carolingian buildings that have largely survived the ravages of time. The Basilica's crypt once housed the relics of Saint Peter and Saint Marcellinus. These had been stolen from Rome on Einhard's instructions by his notary Ratleik. But his servants then had nightmares and the relics started "sweating blood". This made Einhard think that keeping the relics here was not right. Thus the relics were transferred to Ober-Mulinheim am Main, now known as Seligenstadt, which then became a pilgrimage site with a new, larger basilica. During its long history the Einhardsbasilika has served as a barn and then as a hospital, but significant parts such as the nave, north aisle and a crypt are now well conserved. Nearby is 14th century Schloss Fürstenau. This palace complex is a series of buildings which includes remains of the old Electorate of Mainz border fortifications and moated castle (from about 1300) on the north side. Stonecutters, who came from Strasbourg to Steinbach, built the unusual gigantic Renaissance-style gateway arch (1588) between the moated castle's two western corner towers thus replacing the castle wall and opening up the gloomy, dank courtyard of the former castle garden. There is a Renaissance palace mill, a former mint (today a hydroelectric station), the Baroque Kavaliershaus (a palace outbuilding for staff and guests) on the local river, the Mümling, a Neoclassical residential wing, the Neues Palais (1810/11) and a late Baroque orangery in the palace park, which was built in the English style and today serves as a theatre. The Schloss is a private dwelling (for Counts of Erbach-Fürstenau) so that the buildings can only be seen from the outside.

There are many opportunities in Michelstadt for refreshments, including wineries, breweries and restaurants. Apple wine is a popular drink there. For further details, please look at the town's website: <https://www.michelstadt.de/>

MORNING BOOK CLUB REVIEWS:

THE SALT PATH, BY RAYNOR WINN

Review by Muriel:

I recommended the book because I simply loved the beautiful writing: vivid descriptions of the countryside depicted a clear love of nature, combined with honest and often humorous accounts of the author's and her husband's survival during their life affirming journey, and not least giving a human face to the plight of the homeless. I also found their story very inspiring, as when Raynor and Moth lose their farm just days after Moth is diagnosed with CBD, a life threatening illness, and left with very little funds they felt they had no choice but to walk - and walk the South West Coast path, an idea generated by a book Raynor had read in her twenties. I was behind the couple all the way through this exciting mid-life adventure and was thrilled when the "salted blackberries" not only achieved their goals but were in a better state with a home, improved health for Moth, and Raynor writing this book for us all to enjoy.

Comments from the members:

All the members who attended the online meeting in December said that they enjoyed the book. The descriptions of nature were beautifully written - some members had walked sections of the path and could relate to them - and the people the author and her husband met along the way were observed with both humour and insight.

Several found the descriptions of homelessness very disturbing, particularly as it was often the result of a chain of unfortunate circumstances, as in the case of Raynor and Moth. It was upsetting that they could be treated so poorly by someone they had considered a life-long friend, as were the attitudes to them as homeless people by some they met during the course of their walk.

Members agreed that the style of the book was quite unemotional, which had a calming effect. Raynor wrote the book to help her husband, Moth, remember the experiences later on - she also used the notes that he had made in their guidebook - and the book is also about loss, and dealing with death. We all remarked on how the walk helped them to cope with the situation and their love of, and connection to, nature was one of the foremost themes of the book.

The beautiful descriptions of nature as well as the overriding themes of loss, love and hope contributed to make this a book we all enjoyed and would recommend.

THE VANISHING HALF

BY BRIT BENNETT

Review by Barbara:

I recommended this book to the group as I felt it would provide good material for discussion. Aspects of contemporary life, particularly identity, are focus points of the book. At the start the two main characters, twins Stella and Desiree, are living in Mallard, a small town in Louisiana. Mallard's inhabitants are all light-skinned African American people and pride themselves on being so, looking down on people of darker colour. Stella and Desiree spend their childhood in the community, but as adolescents want to escape the poverty of their family life - they have to leave school and take cleaning jobs - and the restrictions of their small hometown for New Orleans. Desiree's move to Washington DC, her job as a fingerprint expert - also a reference to identity - and her marriage to an African American man culminate in the birth of her daughter Jude, who has jet black skin. After Desiree's husband becomes abusive, she returns with Jude to Mallard, which at first proved difficult for both of them. Stella, meanwhile, manages to find an office job in New Orleans, passing herself off as a white person. She marries, has a daughter - who, she notes with relief, has blonde hair - and maintains this new, indeed false, identity to the end of the book, keeping her true origins a secret from her husband and daughter, only acknowledging them right at the end of the story. Jude and Stella's daughter Kennedy happen to meet in Los Angeles which could have been a coincidence too far, but it helped to develop several strands of the plot. I thought the author wrote convincingly about the both casual and brutal racism the characters endured.

Other characters that are sympathetically portrayed are Jude's partner Reese, a young trans man, and the apparently rootless Early, who turns out to be a great support for Desiree. The book is fundamentally about the price - which could be considered too high - that so many people pay for a new identity.

Comments by members:

Most of the members present at the online meeting enjoyed the book, finding the subject matter both interesting and important. Some felt that it was disturbing that Stella felt she had to live a lie for so long, and how difficult it must be to live with constant tension - always worrying that other African American people might see through her facade, which came up a few times in the book. The point came across in the book that life is not black and white - Stella felt an affinity with her black neighbour, although she denied the friendship to keep up the false front she had built. The point was raised that could we, as white people, understand what it would feel like to be black, trying to be white just to have some of the opportunities that should be available to all. Many of the characters in the book are not

what they seem on the surface, which brought up the comment that people perceive the way others look and behave. The book led to a wide-ranging discussion on the race relations situation in the US as well as genetics, group identity etc. - it raised many topics in an interesting discussion. Recommended.

A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP WITH VASTU

by Nicole Garrelts

Restless nights, wakefulness, difficulty falling asleep. Getting up exhausted after a long sleepless night and dragging yourself through the day – does all that sound familiar?

But why does it happen? Too much stress, an unhealthy lifestyle, or sleeping in an environment that prevents us from relaxing?

Vastu can provide answers to these questions. It is a set of principles for healthy living, including recommendations on designing rooms so that they support and nurture the people living in them. Like the more familiar Ayurveda, this traditional Indian theory of architecture and interior design has its roots in the ancient Vedas. It has survived the test of more than five thousand years of practice, and has proved its value millions of times. In India, not only temples, palaces and houses are built using Vastu, but entire cities.

The decisive factor is the orientation and location of the house and the rooms within it – not least the bedroom. The aim is to harness the underlying energies to create a home that fosters wellbeing, regeneration and health. As well as the floorplan, the placing of the furniture within each room is crucial. For example, the position of the bed is decisive for a good night's sleep – and also that of the wardrobes and other bedroom furniture.

Windows and doors also have a big influence on energy, together with the colours used to decorate the room. It's important to know that you can improve things using the furniture and accessories you already have – you can keep your own individual style, as Vastu functions completely independently of that.

The ideal time for a Vastu consultation is when you are choosing a building plot and planning a new house. The construction plans can take account of the site and its orientation, so that health-promoting living spaces can be created from the outset. However, there is always room for improvement in existing houses, flats or offices. A Vastu consultation begins with a visit to the property and an analysis of the rooms based on a floorplan.

Today, the traditional knowledge encompassed by Vastu offers us building blocks for a holistic approach to interior design. It is hugely beneficial to people's quality of life – and sleep is an essential part of that.

Nicole is a qualified interior design engineer and Vastu consultant. Her website is: www.design-concept-garrelts.de. She also offers a regular course on designing rooms for healthy sleep at the Karben Design Academy (in German). You can find out more at: www.karben-design-academy.de/kurs/raumpsychologie-gesund-schlafen/



SLEEP - AND OUR MENTAL HEALTH

by Lyra Turnbull

How did you sleep last night?

Did you wake up today feeling refreshed and full of energy? Or did you have to drag your bleary-eyed self into the bathroom to get ready for the day? Either way, some - but not all - of how you felt this morning is down to how well you slept.

In my practice, I regularly speak with people about their sleeping patterns. Many clients ask me: "Am I getting enough sleep?" "Is my teenager sleeping too much?" "How much is enough anyway?" "And what should I do to improve?" As with most personal questions, the answer is mostly, "Well, that depends..."

While it is normal that we ask ourselves these questions from time to time, our collective expectations and beliefs about sleep are often the cause of deep anxiety. There is a number of reasons why we sometimes find it hard to sleep, and often lifestyle choices and external pressures are at the root of the problem.

If you can reflect on what areas of your life are not as balanced as you would like them to be and identify a few small things you can do to make positive changes, it will often help you to improve the quality of your sleep and life in general.

Sleeplessness is also often a problem for people going through menopause or andropause and there are steps you can take that will ease these, and other, unpleasant symptoms. Of course, if you have a baby, small children, or even a new puppy, you are probably up at regular intervals throughout the night. Taking advantage of any chance to sleep during the day would not be helpful advice for most people, but the chronic fatigue that can set in for parents of small children mean it might be one of the few options available to you.

Knowing you are not alone does not help everyone, but it's estimated that 1 in 10 people in the US suffer from poor sleep caused by disorders or disturbances such as sleep apnea, narcolepsy, insomnia, jet-lag syndrome, and others forms of disturbed biological and circadian rhythms.

If you think you are suffering from any of these disorders, speaking with your family doctor is a sensible first step.

Mindset plays a huge role in many health-related issues and building an accepting and respectful relationship with ourselves can play an important role in resolving sleep related problems. Our attitudes and beliefs about productivity often mean we try to do and achieve as much as we can - of everything. Of course, in an age where we feel there is so much we need to do, it's understandable to want to optimize our sleep to productivity ratio. But taken too far, this can have seriously negative consequences for our mental and physical health.

When I speak with sufferers of burnout, it's not uncommon for them to view sleep as an annoying requirement that eats into their work schedule or other important activities. In fact, according to a recent study, as many as 1/3 of US Americans said they lived for their job and that sleep was just as a way of fueling up so they can achieve more tomorrow. As a counsellor and therapist, I find this development concerning.

Scientists have spent a great deal of time and effort investigating how much sleep we need, often from the perspective that it is an annoying interruption of our otherwise productive activities. Thankfully attitudes are changing!

Currently one of the most promising treatments for chronic insomnia seems to be cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) - sometimes with the support of additional medication. In the context of sleeping problems, CBT helps us to reduce false beliefs about sleep (the cognitive part) and it addresses behavioral aspects, such as what to do when we are lying in bed and can't fall asleep.

It's important to understand that there are many things that can have a negative impact on the quality of your sleep and that there is no cure-all for the problem. Below are just a few suggestions to help you improve your sleep routine:

- Get rid of electronic devices in the bedroom – reading your messages or going on social media in bed is not helpful.
- Avoid blue light in the bedroom – LEDs are often not good for this reason.
- Drop the temperature in your bedroom – optimally, core body temperature should drop by 2 to 3 degrees Fahrenheit to successfully initiate sleep.
- Remember, alcohol is not a sleep aid – while it might make you feel sleepy it impairs REM sleep.
- Restrict the amount of time you spend in bed as close as possible to the actual sleep time.
- Go to bed only when you are already sleepy – not just when you feel fatigued or exhausted.
- Use the bed and bedroom for sleep (and sex) only; avoid eating, TV watching, radio listening, planning or problem solving in bed.
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule, particularly a strict time to get up EVERY morning regardless of the amount of sleep the night before.
- If you are going through menopause or andropause and have regular working hours, try to take a midday nap for max. 30 minutes. Avoid doing this after 3pm, or you could find it hard getting to sleep in the evening.

If you wake up in the night and can't fall sleep:

- If you find yourself unable to sleep (e.g., within 20 min), get out of bed and go to another room and return to bed only when you can feel sleep is imminent.
- Try not to ignore your worries and problems – they can turn into sleep vampires. If you find yourself brooding, get up. Write your thoughts down on paper. When you have finished put them in a drawer and make a pact with yourself that you will deal with them in the morning, at the weekend or at another time when your mind is calmer and you have a better chance of finding workable solutions.
- If you are suffering night sweats or other physical symptoms, speak with your family doctor.
- If you have tried all of the suggestions above and seen no improvement, CBT could help you to deal with the situation.

Book recommendations:

- The House of Sleep by Jonathan Coe
- The Book of Disquiet by Fernando Pessoa
- Why We Sleep by Matthew Walker

Matthew Walker's book "Why We Sleep" opens with made the following announcement: "Scientists have discovered a revolutionary new treatment that makes you live longer. It enhances your memory, makes you more attractive. It keeps you slim and lowers food cravings. It protects you from cancer and dementia. It wards off colds and flu. It lowers your risk of heart attacks and stroke, not to mention diabetes. You'll even feel happier, less depressed, and less anxious. Are you interested?"

Of course, he is talking about the restorative power of sleep!

Sources:

- <https://www.apa.org/research/action/sleep>
- Why we Sleep by Matthew Walker
- The Poetry Pharmacy by William Sieghart
- The Novel Cure by Ella Berthoud and Susan Elderkin

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SHAKESPEARE ON SLUMBER

by Judith Steinau Clark

'To sleep: perchance to dream...'

With these familiar words in mind, I decided to look for other references to sleep and dreams in Shakespeare's work. As in Hamlet's famous soliloquy, sleep is often linked to death and vulnerability in the poet's plays, but he also saw sleep as respite and dreams as a welcome flight from reality – something we can probably all appreciate at the moment. Here are some examples.

The Tempest (3.2.134-142)

Caliban, the original inhabitant of the island that is the scene for the play, reassures the shipwrecked newcomers:

Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd
I cried to dream again.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

The boundaries between dreams, nightmares and reality become blurred as the human and fairy worlds collide. (3.2.447-452)

Helena sees sleep as a way of escaping chaotic reality:

'O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours! [...]
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me a while from mine own company.

Titania, queen of the fairies, falls in love with donkey-headed Bottom at first sight after her jealous husband puts her under a spell. She instructs her fairy assistants to watch over him as he sleeps:

The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
And, for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Julius Caesar (2.1.229-234)

Brutus cannot rest as plans proceed for the conspiracy against Caesar. His young servant, in contrast, is sound asleep:

Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter;
Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber:
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,
Which busy care draws in the brains of men;
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

Romeo and Juliet (2.3.36-42)

Here again, the innocence of youth protects from wakefulness, as Friar Laurence observes:

Care keeps his watch in every old man's eye,
And where care lodges, sleep will never lie;
But where unbruised youth with unstuff'd brain
Doth couch his limbs, there golden sleep doth reign.

Macbeth (2.2.49-51)

Murderer Macbeth laments that his actions have robbed him of the respite of sleep, which is the...

Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

And finally, from Sonnet 43, 13-14:

All days are nights to see till I see thee
And nights bright days when dreams do show me thee.

Useful websites for reading more about Shakespeare:

<https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/>

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/>

An extensive archive of Victorian illustrations of Shakespeare's plays is available free of charge online

at

<https://shakespeareillustration.org/>



Sleep and Relaxation

When life gives you lemons, sometimes it's hard to find the energy to make lemonade. And while it's true that every cloud has a silver lining, incessant thunderstorms can make it hard to spot. And yes, "this too, shall pass" but, until it does... what's one to do?

In our constant need to Do The Right Thing, in our never-ending search for the Bright Side, remember: Taking a break is not quitting. It is an acknowledgement that we are but human and we need time to recharge.

So, take a deep breath. Close your eyes for a moment. Exhale. Be still. Accept that you need and want this break, and lose yourself in the words on these pages for just a little while.

When I heard that the topic for this month's magazine was sleep, it reminded me of the time a few years when my children were small and we didn't get much sleep! Those exhausted days may be a distant memory now, but this little rhyme that I wrote at the time brings it all back!

In my heart I know it's just a phase,
and one day I'll sleep again,
But for now the single burning question
is the magic word of when?
The patter of tiny feet in the dark
sends shivers down my spine,
Followed with the cries of 'Mummy', 'water'
and any excuse to whine!
My childless days were so naive,
I can't believe I didn't see,
What a wonderful luxury sleep can really be.
I fantasise of unbroken nights,
and mornings full of cheer,
But the bleary-eyed reality is that
sleep does not live here!

-Claire Naujoks



As a working mum, now a working-from-home-due-to-the-pandemic-mum, I find the days blur together into a confusing collage of to-do's and need-this-by's. With work in the morning, the kids in the afternoons and the dogs (we have three) in between, the only time I have for myself is usually at night. During this time I find myself practicing "Revenge bedtime procrastination" or sleep procrastination, defined as the decision to sacrifice sleep for leisure time that is driven by a daily schedule lacking in free time. I would read my books, chat with my friends in other timezones; anything to "reclaim my time."

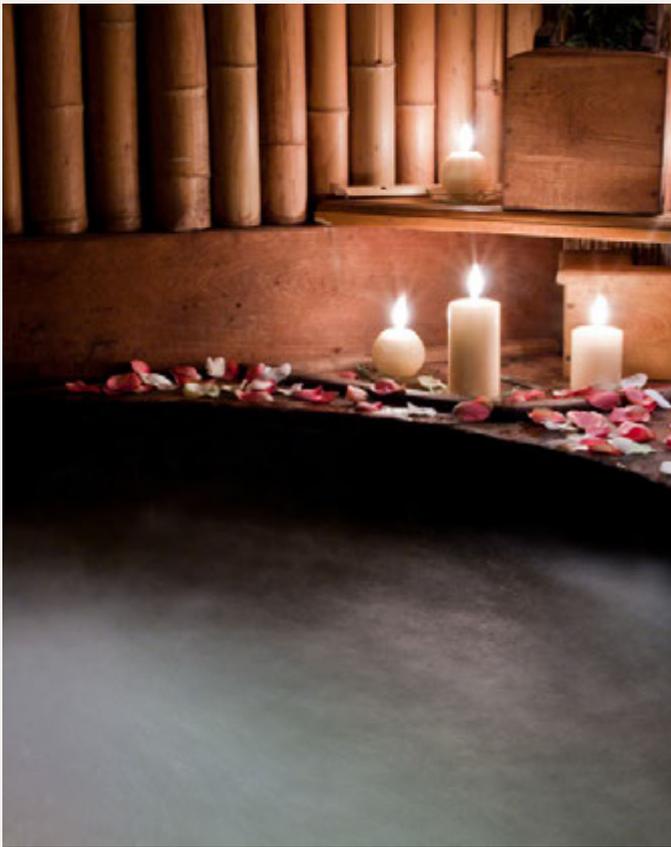
This does, however, naturally cut into my much-needed rest time, as my husband pointed out. Although I insisted I was fine, that I was eating right (well, better), he pointed out that I was just harming myself in the long run. He invited me to, instead, work out with him once in a while, to relieve whatever stress I had built up during the day.

I decided to heed his advice and now pace myself during the day, doing what I can and deferring or delegating others, building up enough free time for regular gym sessions where I can just re-center and focus on myself; it also means I am bone-tired and sleep like a baby on most nights.

Still, sleep procrastination is a hard habit to break; the naughty side of me just wants to do my own thing and forget about my next-day responsibilities, but I make sure that these days are few and far in between.

-Julie Ng





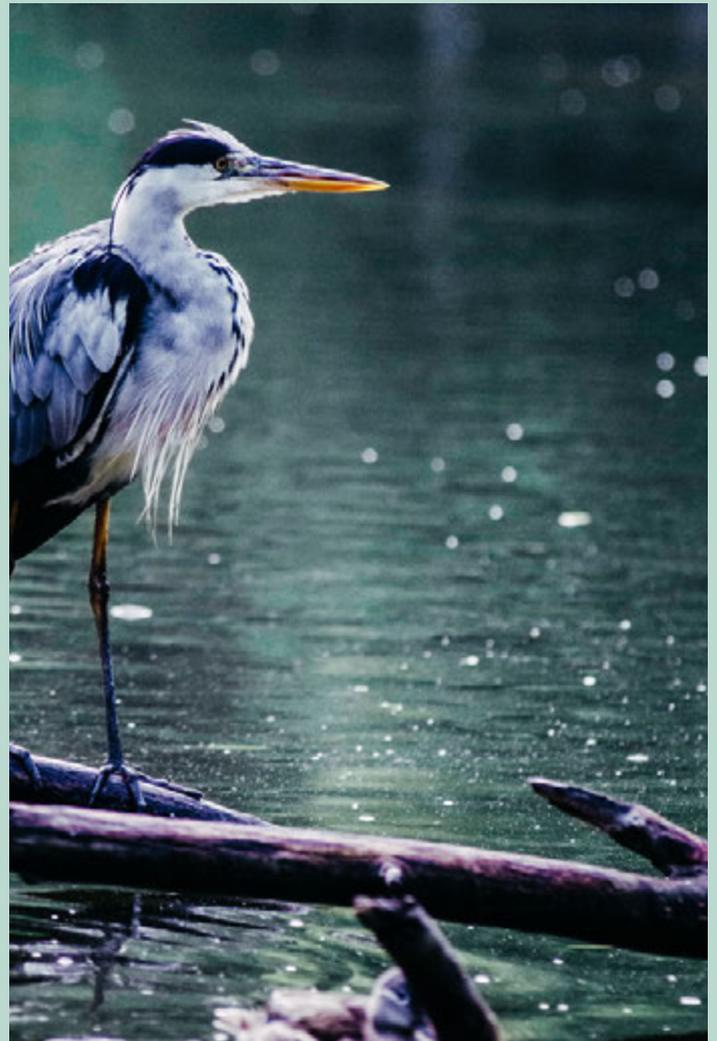
2021 was a pretty difficult year for many because of Covid 19. On top of that I was diagnosed in February with breast cancer. Our planned skiing holiday had to be cancelled 3 days before travelling and, together with my husband Harvey, I embarked on the "adventure" of chemotherapy. Chemo hits every part of you and depletes your energy to an extent you never imagined possible and so after 2.5 months of it (with quite a way to go ahead of us), we decided to have a weekend away. 45 minutes away was plenty to just get a change of scenery and have the relief of being in a hotel where you don't have to worry about food shopping, cooking, washing up etc. Arriving in my exhausted and emotional state you cannot imagine my delight when the receptionist told us we had been upgraded to the honeymoon suite! We had a bathtub with jacuzzi function in our bedroom. Due to Covid restrictions there were only 2-hour slots for the hotel swimming pool, but as there were very few other guests staying, we were able to stay there as long as we liked. A weekend away was as refreshing as a week and we returned to Frankfurt strengthened to continue with the next phases of treatment.

- Fiona Mayne

The Peace of Wild Things

by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water,
and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not come to tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and I am free.



Antidotes to Wakefulness

Counting sheep doesn't work for you? Then experiment with some of our members' tried-and-tested routines for getting to sleep.

"My tip is the yoga technique of Surya Bhedana Pranayama, from a book by the Canadian yoga author Kareen Zebroff." (This single nostril breathing technique or "sun-piercing breath" harmonises the body's heating and cooling energies to calm and regulate the breath and the body. There are lots of descriptions online as well if you want to try this.)

"I find that calculating from 100 to zero helps (no sheep and often interrupted by other thoughts) – especially if I decide to do it auf Deutsch, because then I really have to concentrate and any extraneous thoughts don't have a chance!"

"When I was little, I used to lie in bed imagining adventures where I was the heroine. I was a big fan of a Batman TV series (back in the 1960s!!) and my favourite night-time scenario involved ousting Robin from the Batmobile and playing a crucial role in rescuing the people of Gotham City from doom at Batman's side. I wonder if it would help me sleep or keep me awake if I tried it today?"

"A satisfactory day with some physical activity built in, for example yoga/walking/gardening together with some reading/music/creativity. Bedtime rituals – a little quiet time with a hot herbal tea."

"My own way of falling asleep faster in winter is to have a really warm bath with bath bombs with a lavender base. Something about seeing the fizzy bomb dissolve in a tub full of water, and how sweet the scent is, mesmerizes me. In summer, I find the heat just knocks me out!"

"To switch off my over-active brain, I visualise the letters of the alphabet one by one. They all have different colours. I rarely get as far as Z. It might sound a bit weird, but I have just come across a character in a novel doing the same thing, including the colours, so I am not alone!"

"I used to sing a very old lullaby to my daughters. Maybe some readers remember it. It starts 'Golden slumbers kiss your eyes, smiles awake you when you rise.' I think that's a lovely image. My mum sang it too."

"Mostly I seem to be able to go to sleep almost as my head hits the pillow, sometimes when I wake up in the night I try imagining to be in a train watching the countryside buzz past. Whether it actually helps to go to sleep I don't dare to suggest!"

"For nights that seem to go on and on, I start testing my maths by adding up a sequence of numbers, such as $1+2+3=6$, then $6+7+8=21$, then $21+22+23=66$ etc. Within a few minutes I have fallen asleep. Also just imagining walking along a beautiful sandy beach with the hypnotic sound of the waves splashing on the shore helps."

- compiled by Judith Steinau Clark



BOOKS TO HELP YOU SLEEP –

OR JUST TO KEEP YOU COMPANY WHEN YOU CAN'T

by Nikola Scott

A new year, a new you, a new and wonderful opportunity to read as many books as you possibly can. It's one of the few reliable remedies, in my opinion, to survive these gloomy February days of ours; others being, of course, hot beverages with a healthy side of chocolate and, most importantly, rest and relaxation. Take it from a certified insomniac, a good night's sleep is a gorgeous thing, setting you up for the day in a way nothing else quite can, and if you struggle in this area, these books might help you find your zen.

Why We Sleep: The New Science of Sleep and Dreams by Matthew Walker. The author unravels decades of research of why sleep is so crucial and how you can harness its super-power. I cannot recommend this book enough to help you understand sleep and sleeping, it was truly life-changing for me.

The Power of When: Learn the Best Time to do Everything. Michael Breus – aka 'The Sleep Doctor' – has fascinating insights into how much of our lives are dominated by our individual chronotypes. Are we a night owl, an early bird or something in between? This book deep-dives into our circadian rhythm and the way it dominates all our waking and sleeping hours. Many sleep issues, he argues, can be addressed by making small tweaks to your daily routine and, most crucially, exposure to daylight at the right time.

Sleep Smarter by Shawn Stevenson. Another really good introduction to the importance of sleep and how to establish a good 'sleep hygiene' (yes, apparently that's a thing now). I listened to this on audio, and I like the author's enthusiasm and verve, and his many good tips and recommendations.

And if you're bored of tossing and turning, listening to someone else having an infuriatingly good night's sleep next to you (just saying), then these two fictional kindred spirits might help while away the dark hours.

When the Lights Go Out by Mary Kubica. After the death of her mother, Jessie suddenly realises she's been living with a fake identity for years. Trying to uncover the mystery behind her mother's actions back then, she is forced to question everything she knows. But as her insomnia spirals out of control, she finds she can no longer separate what's in her mind and the terrifying things that seem to be real...

Before I Go to Sleep by S. J. Watson. A brilliant, heart-stopping novel about a woman who suffers from amnesia after an accident years earlier and is now forced to piece together her life with the help of her journal. Every morning she wakes up with a small memory that gets her further, but each night, sleep will make her forget what she's learned... I loved this one.

Nikola Scott is the author of My Mother's Shadow, Summer of Secrets and The Orchard Girls. If you'd like to get in touch, email her at nikola@nikolascott.com.



HOW TO TURN YOUR BEDROOM INTO A SANCTUARY FOR REST

by Nicole Varga

Our bedroom is the last thing we see at night and the first thing we wake up to each morning — not to mention we spend about a third of our lives sleeping there. It has the potential to be a place to reset, recharge, and recenter yourself. But unwanted clutter, electronics and even bad Feng shui might be preventing you from experience calm and relaxation in your bedroom.

If you struggle to fall asleep, you might be surprised to see just how much easier it can be to doze off at night if you're in a truly comfortable space. Here are a few tips to turn your bedroom into a bastion of tranquility:

1. First and foremost, declutter your bedroom and get everything out that is not for the specific purpose of what you do in your bedroom - presumably spending time in bed and getting dressed.
2. Keep electronics out of the bedroom. This may be extremely hard for some of you, but make the effort to charge your phone somewhere else and invest in an old-school alarm clock. The light emitted from electronics can disrupt your circadian rhythm and looking at your phone before sleeping and when you wake up is the opposite of soothing.
3. Find a good mattress that's right for you and add a mattress topper, especially in the winter, if you prefer that plush, sinking-into-bed feeling.
4. Real down comforters offer airy lightness while keeping the cold out and your body temperature regulated.
5. The perfect throw blanket is can be the perfect covering for a nap while adding a tad more warmth over your feet in winter. Faux fur is a sumptuous choice.
6. A soft, fluffy rug near your bed so your toes will thank you in the morning.
7. Keep a pile of books next to your bed so you'll reach for them instead of your phone.
8. Make sure you can dim your lights to create a calm atmosphere. A good bedside lamp that you with adjustable brightness levels is perfect for reading in bed and slowly transitioning to lights out.





9. Tidy up your bed first thing in the morning so it's inviting to snuggle back into it later that day.

10. Find sheets that feel wonderful to you. Cool percale is my personal favourite, but others might like a good flannel.

11. Soft colours like blues and greens can have a calming impact on your mood. The one colour hotels know not to paint the whole room in is yellow. Yellow affects the nervous system and too much is likely to lead to a bad night's sleep.

12. Regulate the temperature. You can do this with colours in addition to the thermostat. If you tend to be cold, try using bordeaux-red sheets in the winter. If you tend to wake up sweating, stick to white.

13. Keep a gratitude or bullet journal and favourite pens nearby (a good alternative to looking at your phone in your bed).

14. Give yourself 10 minutes in the evening for self-care. Keep foot creams, body lotions and the like in your nightstand drawer.

15. Decant a nice body lotion into a pretty glass jar and keep it on your dresser.

16. Feng shui tells us the bed should be against a solid wall facing or adjacent to the door so we have the most safe and secure feeling while we sleep.

17. A clean and clear space under the bed is also a tenet of Feng shui, to keep energy flowing smoothly.

18. One more interesting tip from Feng Shui is that you shouldn't keep pictures of your family (kids, parents) in your bedroom. Keep these pictures anywhere else in your home, but the bedroom should have a focus on you and your partner.

19. Sound machines are easy to find and can be a total game-changer when it comes to creating a relaxing bedroom sanctuary, especially if you have people who snore in your house or are a light sleeper and wake up easily.

20. Use calming scents like essential oils to wind down at the end of the day. Lavender is regarded as the best scent for rest and relaxation, followed by sandalwood, jasmine, rose, and bergamot.

Nicole Varga is a holistic interior designer located in Bad Homburg. Visit her website at www.nicole-varga.com



*"Almost everything will work again
if you unplug it for a few minutes...
.....including you."*

- Anne Lamott

PHOTO BY MIC GRUBER