



EXPERT INTERVIEW

Alicia Diaz

Ayurveda



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Alicia Diaz: Hi there, my name is Alicia Diaz and I'm an Ayurvedic practitioner. I practice the holistic medicine rooted in the ancient healing system of India. In particular, I help women overcome fatigue and create abundant energy and lifelong vibrant health. I've practiced holistic medicine for a little more than eight years now. I've studied with three world master physicians of Ayurveda in both India and in the U.S. I really love that, my practice, the way I match this ancient healing tradition in today's society and really help my clients to understand that in a practical, tangible and usable way that they can apply in their lives right now.

Larry: How do you view the problem of sleep?

Alicia Diaz: So Ayurveda views sleep-related problems mainly from the perspective of the body being out of tune with the rhythms of nature for a number of reasons. But with that belief and the way I read and look at the body is we are seamlessly intertwined with nature, with the world around us. When you look at the rhythms of the sun, the way it rises in the sky and the way the sun sets and that we are not nocturnal creatures as we are awake during the daylight. We actually have to be hormonally, physically, mentally, emotionally connected to those cycles to have deep rejuvenating sleep at night.

The other lens that Ayurveda looks at the body through is the nervous system. The nervous system's tissue



actually is imbalanced by one or more of the five elements, which are ether, air, fire, water and earth. So, as an example, when ether or air and your nervous system are not balanced, that might manifest as anxiety, rapid dreams, worry, stress, that type of thing, tension in the body. Someone would have a hard time falling asleep at night, or rather, they will toss and turn and wake up all throughout the night. So that would be connected to the element of air because air is movement. When you think of air blowing and rushing, the wind, it causes the mind to just be extra active. So that's the ether or air elements and your nervous system.

If the fire element entered the nervous system, that is kind of like the spark of the driven, perfectionist type of person, who maybe works throughout the night, burning the midnight oil. They'll often be the ones who need to read to fall asleep at night. They'll be the ones who love watching TV or working on the computer late into the night. These people often have difficulty falling asleep. Usually they want to stay or fall asleep. They're able to stay asleep, but that's just an example of the fire element entering the nervous system. We'll talk more about how that manifests in a moment.

Again, using these examples of these five elements entering the nervous system, the water or earth element enters the nervous system because the water and earth elements are a little heavier and denser. That looks more like excessive sleep that could manifest itself as snoring or sleep apnea, potentially even depression,



because of the heavy nature of water and earth. So the water or earth element entering the nervous system is a little more common. People who tend to gain weight easily or who have a slower, sluggish metabolism, which is also connected to snoring, are susceptible to sleep apnea.

So, proper sleep is really important because your brain is undergoing rejuvenation and reorganization at night. So the neurons and the brain cells, they are undergoing deep changes. You need to rejuvenate those and restore yourself to feel bright and fresh and alive and engaged in your day the next day.

Another reason proper sleep is so important according to Ayurveda is your body is detoxing and cleansing every single day, especially at night. So when the sun is highest in the sky, during the daytime between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., that's when you tend to be the hungriest. That's when your stomach is growling and you want lunch. While at night, between the hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m., is when, instead of keeping food and nourishment outside, the body is going in and digesting and removing the toxicity that has built up during the day. It needs that time to cleanse and rejuvenate from the inside out.

So it's really important to embrace the 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. time with sleep. Do not feed the body more food during that time because it's trying to detox. We'll go into more of that in later modules. So proper sleep is super important because your brain is rejuvenating,



your body is detoxing. For women, it actually helps keep their menstrual cycle regular and potentially can reduce pain during that time of the month. So I work a lot in my practice with women who have menstrual imbalances and hormonal imbalances. One of the things that throws off the hormones a lot is a lack of sleep, not just enough sleep, but deeply rejuvenating sleep.

One of the reasons for PMS and painful imbalances around that cycle, they all come out at that time of the month, is because the body is not getting rejuvenated at other times and that time of the month is just another cleansing time. So if the body is not cleansing every day, then it goes through this massive cleansing each month. It becomes more painful and tougher. Proper sleep is needed so the body can detox and cleanse deeply every day.

Additionally, your mind and emotions often are balanced more when you get deeper sleep. So, in addition to the body physically detoxing each night, there's also a mental and emotional detox that needs to happen. That's because throughout the day, when we are interacting with the world, there's lot of thoughts and feelings and emotions that come up. You need that nighttime to rejuvenate and digest all that. The body also needs to not only digest its food, but digest the thoughts, feelings and emotions that arise during the day. If you don't get the opportunity to do that, it can contribute to imbalance in the future.



Then there's the obvious one. Sleep is so important because it keeps all of your bodily processes functional and working optimally. It improves your energy level and it is just, overall, restorative. I'm sure if you've ever been around a little child who didn't have their nap or didn't sleep well the night before, they are just cranky and crying and throwing tantrums. Well I hate to tell this to you, but adults are the same way. We're just like the little kids. If we don't get enough sleep, we are cranky as well. It's just that it comes out in a different way.

So that's one very simple example of why sleep is so important. It's because if you don't get enough sleep at night, or if you don't get a high quality of sleep at night, you're reducing your body's immune system in a massive way. So, actually, sleep impacts your immune system's function. You might notice you get repeated coughs, colds, and congestion or that not getting enough sleep can throw off how well you function in your work, your mental clarity. You feel as though you have this veil of fog over you all day. It becomes really hard for you to get in touch with some things you used to love or like, such as activities or engaging with your friends and family or your partner. It can lead to not only difficulty concentrating but, according to Ayurveda, to digestive imbalances. Poor digestion is the root cause of almost every other imbalance we see happen in the human body. So sleep is a really important part of promoting lifelong health, vitality, longevity, and youthfulness.



Again, I've seen this in my practice. If you don't get good enough sleep at night that is one of the root causes of depression, chronic fatigue syndrome, migraines, restless leg syndrome and a whole slew of digestive disorders. As I mentioned, it also can cause lots of hormonal and menstrual imbalances, among many other things.

Larry: What symptoms should one look for?

Alicia Diaz: So, some of the ways you would know you're not getting rejuvenating, deep enough sleep at night would probably be obvious to you. They would include cloudy thinking during the day or just kind of feeling cranky or a little on edge. Often times people come out and the relationship with people who are closest to you. So, if you said you're being snappy or more self-conscious or just being more sensitive and taking things personally more often or getting frustrated more easily, these are all signs you're not getting good enough sleep.

Some things you may not realize also are symptoms of not getting deep enough sleep, such as constipation. If you're not getting a full, complete bowel movement every single day, that's actually, according to Ayurveda, the first of six stages can manifest in the human imbalance. It is actually just clogging of the bodily channels, one being the elimination channel. So if you are unable to have a full, complete bowel movement every single day that could be a sign you're actually not having deep, rejuvenating sleep.



If you notice during the day you're having more feelings of anxiety or fear, or worry comes up more than usual, that is another sign you're not getting deep, rejuvenating sleep every night. If your spots are kind of swirling around in your mind more often than usual that is another sign you're not getting deep, rejuvenating sleep every night. If you notice you're waking up at the same time every night that is a huge indicator there's a potential imbalance in one of your organs.

In Ayurveda, 2 a.m. is the liver time. So if you're waking up at 2 a.m. that probably means the liver shuts out. Then you would look at some of your habits. If you're having a drink of beer or alcohol at night, that is very commonly in a lot of clients I see, the reason they wake up at 2 a.m. is because their liver is trying to get the toxins out of their system and it causes them to wake up.

Another reason you're not getting deep enough sleep is you're catching more colds than usual; your immune system is not working right. If you're getting sleepy during the day, if you're getting that mid-afternoon crash, or if you feel like you cannot function throughout the day without a cup of coffee or tea or some kind of caffeinated beverage, that's obviously a sign you're not getting deep enough rejuvenating sleep at night.

Ayurveda uses three body types. So additionally, symptoms you can look for often may be connected to your unique body type. In Ayurveda, we use the



element system—ether, air, fire, water, earth. Everyone has all of these elements within their body, within their being, that makes them who they are and they all have them in different ratios. In Ayurveda, people of ether or air type are called Vata. They might have different symptoms of poor sleep than, say, someone who is a fire type, which is called Pitta, or someone who is a Kapha, which is the water and earth type.

So if someone is that airy type, these are people who tend to be the warrior during the day, people who feel tense and maybe a little stressed out. These people may tend to be artists because they have great creativity. So none of these types are good or bad, it's just how the elements are manifesting in your body. There's very healthy expressions of those elements, which should be that creativity but then, when those elements are in excess, it might create that worry and anxiety, or forgetfulness when you forget when you get to the room what you're going to do, grab or what you were going to say next. So that's the symptom of an excess of the air element in the nervous system.

So the way this might manifest itself as a symptom is nightmares. You might have really busy dreams, dreams of flying, dreams of running or scary dreams, wanting kind of to get away from people. It would also, as I mentioned earlier with the elimination system, affect people who are of this nature, those who have the air type of insomnia could have constipation during the day. They can have difficulty concentrating. They can get bloated very easily and feel as though their



belly is bloated. They often will toss and turn or wake up multiple times throughout the night. So those are the symptoms of the air type of insomnia.

Then if you are more of a fire type, you tend to be an entrepreneur, the business professional. The fire type predominantly indicates people who are really driven and work hard. This basic type has a tendency for being easily frustrated or angry if there's too much fire. If there's a healthy amount of fire, that's increasing the drive and the "go getter" kind of mentality. If it's an excess, it could create frustration, which also creates acidity in the body.

So any signs of acidity in this body type could be indicative of not getting good enough sleep at night. Acidity might look like acid reflux disease (also called gastritis or "heartburn"), that type of thing. If you feel generally "hot" most of the time, or if you tend to feel hot easily, if you wake up at that liver time I mentioned, 2 a.m. Waking up at 2 a.m. is a symptom of this type of insomnia. For this person, it might be harder to fall asleep as they think they need to read or watch TV or something to help them fall asleep but it's hard for them to stay asleep. Another symptom you might notice if you are in this category is it's probably hard for you to fall asleep with a lot of light in the room, you need complete darkness. Any of these symptoms actually are just little reminders you might not be getting deep enough sleep at night.



The third category is the water earth type of person, which in Ayurveda we call Kapha. This person tends to gain weight easily or just holds onto excess fatty tissue that could contribute to sleep apnea or snoring. It happens a little bit more often in men because they have an oval shape in their vocal cord area. Women have a rounder shape, so there's a larger area for the air to move back and forth. Men have this shape because of their Adams' apple, it constricts that area a little bit more. If they lay flat, the airway could get constricted and that contributes to snoring.

Sleep apnea is usually a much more clinical manifestation of a Kapha imbalance but it usually stems from being overweight or obese, weight gain and that type of thing. So those fall into the category of a Kapha type imbalance and a symptom that you definitely should be looking for. If you have any of these conditions, you're definitely not getting deep rejuvenating sleep at night. These people, even if it hasn't manifested itself into snoring or sleep apnea, they tend to have more colds and congestion, upper respiratory infections, congestion in their lungs and perhaps a lot of mucus in the sinuses. They might fall asleep easily. This type tends to enjoy their sleep and seem as though they get really deep sleep. However, in the early morning hours, they might wake up in the pre-dawn hours or around dawn and feel really restless at that time. So these are all signs of not getting rejuvenating sleep at night.

Larry: What aggravates the problem?



Alicia Diaz: According to Ayurveda, one thing that could aggravate your sleep at night would be indigestion. For each of the different body types, that means eating foods that are difficult for you to digest, or difficult for that particular body type to digest, or eating too late at night, as I mentioned earlier. It's better to eat those foods during the daytime, when the sun is at its peak from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. That's when your digestive system has the greatest ability to digest, absorb and assimilate nutrients because that's when your enzyme activity is the highest.

So any time during daylight hours, that's when you want to eat most of your meal. As soon as the sun sets, every minute after it gets darker and darker and darker, your body's ability to produce the enzymes necessary to effectively digest, absorb and assimilate your nutrients drops drastically. So eating late at night always will aggravate sleep. Again, your body is rejuvenating and trying to detox and cleanse at night, so if you're putting food into it, you're giving it more work to do. Then it doesn't get to do the work it was given throughout the day, so it gets back out and toxicity accumulates as a result.

So indigestion, eating too late at night, any use of caffeine during the day, from any source at all, will aggravate sleep, although to what degree depends on the person. Coffee-type people, if they have a lot of more water on earth element, they might be able to get away with a little caffeine without having major



sleep disturbance. But for some people, the fire type and lots of people, the worrier type, they are going to be much more impacted by caffeine, coffee in particular. Any source of caffeine will aggravate the fire elements massively. It causes a lot of acidity in the body and the fire type tends to have more acidity already. So any kind of caffeine, coffee, tea, soda, chocolate will aggravate sleep for the Pitta individual.

For the Vata individual, there is that air element person, that air element manifests itself in their nervous system. Their nervous systems are already more sensitive to the world around them. So any caffeine used goes right to their nervous system. I know a lot of my clients who have more Vata in their body constitution can tolerate hardly any caffeine without feeling a little jittery or on edge. So those things definitely will aggravate the problem. Also, exercise will aggravate the problem if you do too much strenuous exercise right before you go to bed, or too much in general for your body type, as well as a lack of exercise as well.

If you're completely sad, completely sedentary, then it's going to be hard for you to rest that night if you're exercising too much. You really have to find that balance for you. Know your body type and know how much exercise is appropriate for you. Sleeping during the daytime, such as taking an afternoon nap, or napping at any time during the day, falling asleep after meals, or anything like that, that's all going to contribute to poor sleep at night.



Clearly if you're in pain, if you have a joint disorders or any other kind of pain, that's going to disrupt sleep at night. Sleep apnea or snoring also will prevent you from getting deep rejuvenating sleep. Stress, anxiety and worry are huge culprits in modern society. So many things are constantly on our minds. A lot of people have a hard time putting those things to rest and then they are not able to sleep. They're tossing and turning, having dreams about the stuff they have to do, thinking about it.

Then in our recommendation, I'll get into some of the things you can do to balance those things or release those things before you go to sleep. Constant stress, constant anxiety and constant worry are always going to impact sleep and not let you get deep rejuvenating sleep at night. Our society, which flourishes in cities, is actually a big cause of poor sleep, due to the fact we are bombarded with sensory stimuli constantly.

So everything that comes into our five senses is going to impact our sleep. If you're staring at a computer screen all day or watching TV or movies, that will impact your sleep. If you're driving a lot or listening to a lot of loud music through the day or you're always wearing headphones, it will impact your sleep. If you're talking to someone and you're always hearing their voice, if you're surrounded by cars and trucks and lots of street noise, that will impact your sleep. So sight, sound, taste, touch, smell, we are bombarded with our five senses. The more you're bombarded during the day, the worse



your sleep is at night. We will let you know how to balance it.

If you can get out in nature once a week, just to cut out all that sensory stimulus, that will drastically improve your sleep at night. Of all of those things, that sensory bombardment particularly, artificial lighting is one of the biggest culprits contributing to poor sleep at night. If you are in an office where you're not exposed to sunlight at all during the day, and you're only under fluorescent lighting or staring at a computer screen all day that will throw off your circadian rhythm. If you then come home and you're watching a movie or TV, reading email or watching YouTube videos on your computer, then try going to bed, your mind is really active. You are also exposed to a massive amount of blue light during the day. All that fake artificial lighting mostly falls into the category of blue light.

So natural lighting, such as using candlelight after sunset or being exposed to the sun more regularly, actually will help balance the circadian rhythm. I won't go into that too much right now, but exposure to all that artificial lighting draws off your hormones, draws off the endocrine system, draws off all your circadian rhythm. It will really aggravate your ability to sleep well at night. Those are some general things for all body types. Then we want to look at these three body types and some of the things more specific to those certain types and what aggravates the problem. So let's talk about the air and ether type, the Vata type.



If your room is too cold or you're too cold at night, that will aggravate your ability to sleep well. If you're travelling a ton or if you're exposed to excess noise or light or excess sensory bombardment, since your nervous system is a little more sensitive than, say, an earth person, that will aggravate insomnia or prevent you from getting deep sleep. If you exercise too much, there's a healthy amount of exercise for you but if it's too much, it will aggravate sleep. If you're having poor sleep at night, it could be because you're exercising too much. If you're Vata type, they usually have the worst insomnia in the fall because it's a very windy season. Sometimes in the spring as well, but usually in the fall, because it's a very windy season. That body type is really aggravated by the wind and excess air. It's also aggravated by dry climate.

So if you live in the desert or at high altitude that could aggravate insomnia. An excessive amount of raw foods for this person could aggravate insomnia as well. Certain types of food could aggravate insomnia, such as airy food like leafy greens or beans. If they're eating a little too much of that, that could be a problem as well as excess sexual activity. So for the Vata type people, those things could be aggravating insomnia or giving them poor sleep.

For fire type people, Pitta type people, anything that's going to cause their bodies to be acidic is going to promote poor sleep. So will eating a lot of sour food, eating hot chili peppers and other spicy foods. If the room is too hot, or if they are drinking coffee, caffeine,



hard liquor, red wine and similar drinks that definitely is going to aggravate their sleep. That's because it makes their bodies really acidic and they already tend to be acidic. Summer, because it's a hot season, could cause them to have poor sleep because their bodies tend to be hot already. Excessive stress could aggravate their insomnia and also, for the fire type, staying up late at night. These are the go getters. They love to work all night and, again, that's going to create a serious problem. So they are staying up too late, not going to bed until midnight. When your body is trying to detox and you're staying awake and getting more sensory bombardment, more things to think about, more things to work on, that promotes poor sleep that doesn't let you rejuvenate.

Then the third body type, the main thing for the earth-water type of person, the Kapha person, is overeating. Overeating, eating between meals, just eating too much food, eating too late at night, that's one of the biggest things that's going to contribute to poor sleep. Then they might feel as though they're sleeping well because they just pass out very easily at night. They love their sleep and they love sleeping but the quality of their sleep is actually not that great. These are the people who, if they're overeating, they tend to hold on to a little extra weight. That causes them to snore more, causes them to have sleep apnea issues and those all can contribute to very poor quality sleep that night.

Larry: How would you treat the problem?



Alicia Diaz: When it comes to treating insomnia or sleep disorders, from an Ayurvedic perspective, we always look at the individual's unique body type. So it's hard for me to just teach off the cuff when there are so many different modalities that I use with my clients. But the most important thing is for you to understand your unique body type and what the root cause is of your insomnia. Because then you can apply so many different modalities, but if you never remove the root cause or discover what the root cause is, then that disorder could continue to perpetuate.

So first thing, discover the root cause if you can. I'll share with you a handful of amazing techniques that really have worked for a lot clients of mine, regardless of their body type although it always depends upon the individual. Generally speaking, for any body type, it depends on the time of year and many other factors. A general guideline is trying to get to bed as close to 10 p.m. as possible and waking up with the sunrise. So the reason it changes based on body type is because different body types actually need a different amount of sleep each night. But I could sum it up and say around 10 pm. is a good rule of thumb for most people. After 10 p.m., that's when your body starts dipping in to its own detox, its own internal detox.

So be in bed by 10 p.m. and try to wake up with the sun. Now, the time the sun rises every morning is different based on the time of year. In the summer, you have longer days and a lot more sunlight. In the winter, you have shorter days and a lot more darkness. So in



the summer, depending on your body type but still generally speaking, every person's body type will need a little less sleep because you have naturally more hours of daylight and fewer hours of darkness.

In the winter, it is more of that kind of hibernation energy happening. So regardless of your body type, you probably need more sleep in the winter. The sun sets around 5 p.m. and that's a long night. But for me, I have to go to bed right at sunset. You'll have much more darkness, so your body actually needs deeper rejuvenating sleep. Everything in Ayurveda is based upon the cycles of life because we are seamlessly connected to the natural world around us. That means you're intimately connected with every single morning, with sunrises and sunsets, the cycles of each day.

If you can ride the wave of that energy with your body every morning and wake up with the sun, it's like you're harnessing the sun's energy into your body and you get to ride that wave all day. The longer you sleep past the sunrise, the harder it is to get out of bed and the less energy you'll have for the rest of the day. So ride the wave, use that energy, that natural energy the earth provides you and wake up close to the sunrise. So those are the small cycles every single day, day to day. Then you have the larger cycles of the year each year, the seasons changing and the amount of daylight changing. Then you have the cycles of your life. So tune your body up so it is in rhythm with nature and you will be able to tap into boundless energy. So that's number one.



Go to bed as close to 10 p.m. as possible if you can. I'd say 11 p.m., at the latest, if you're really a night owl and you love staying up late or 10 p.m. sounds insane. Start where you're at and move it as close to that as you can. Try to wake with the sun or just before sunrise. If you wake up early, the first thing you can do is go for a walk. That will help get your circulation going, get the blood pumping. There's a practice in Ayurveda that we do right upon waking called Nasya. This is an oil treatment you can keep right next to your bed. It's in a little dropper bottle. Before you get out of bed in the morning, you can put these drops into your nose and sniff the oil up. It's infused with herbs that, when you sniff them, go right into your nervous system and make you feel bright and awake and alive. So go to bed by 10 p.m., wake up with the sun or just before sunrise, sniff a couple of Nasya oil drops up into your nose to wake you right up, then get out and go for a walk.

Having an exercise routine that's compatible with your body mind type also will be very rejuvenating. It will help treat insomnia and any sleep disorders. One of the other things that happens when you sleep is your muscles relax deeply and they become disengaged. They should become less tense. There are signals sent to your brain that tells your parasympathetic nervous system, your rest and relaxation response, to kick in and help you relax. So you want to do practices that help induce those qualities in your body. One of the best practices for that is massage, particularly oil massage. You can try to get massages from your local massage



therapist. You also can do daily self daily massages in your own bathroom. I teach clients how to do that through my website. There also are some great resources in the website's member area on how to do that. Basically you give yourself a massage every day to stretch your muscles and help induce that relaxation that will help treat insomnia and help you have deeper, rejuvenating sleep because your muscles won't be tense.

There's an oil self-massage technique that we use in Ayurveda that is just massaging the feet and the scalp before bed. This is a phenomenal practice that I use with clients to help them heal insomnia and sleep issues. So Ayurveda has two kinds of oil. One is called Bhringraj and is not an herbal formula and one is called Bрами, which is another herb. They are herb-infused oils that you massage into the bottom of your feet, and just a tiny bit into the scalp at a certain point, that help induce deep sleep.

Also, if you don't use Bhringraj or Bрами oil, you can use just cold-pressed organic, raw, sesame oil. It's just the raw sesame oil you buy from the grocery store, food grade. You can use a little bit of that, warm it up and massage the bottom of your feet before you go to bed. Then put a little bit on your scalp. Again, I'll teach you the ways to do this but it's very easy and it actually activates a lot of the sweet point in the body. There's a therapy that I used in Ayurveda called Marma Therapy. It is very similar to acupressure, just like acupressure points in traditional Chinese medicine, a medicine



system that also uses acupuncture. The points are very similar but they are applied differently in Ayurveda.

Essentially, by massaging the oil on the bottom of your feet, you're hitting a lot of those points. You're infusing the qualities of the sesame oil or herbal oils, which are even more powerful. Those oils are going into those points and into the body and helping induce deep, sound sleep. You also can simply do some deep breathing practices before bed, learn meditation, just watch your breath, do gentle yoga or stretching exercises or any relaxation before bed.

One of the big things I tell most of my clients, again regardless of their body type, is reduce all artificial lighting and go to bed as close to 10 p.m. as possible. If you can't do it from sunset to bed, I understand, but limit your exposure to artificial lighting after sunset. At the very least, turn off all artificial lighting an hour before you go to sleep. If you need light during that time, that hour before you go to sleep, light candles in every room of your house so you can still see what you need to do. Brush your teeth by candlelight, make yourself some hot tea, read a little bit if you want, but try not to look at your iPad, your iPhone, your computer screen or your TV right before you're going to bed. Candlelight is a natural yellow light that actually will stimulate the hypothalamus in your brain to induce sound sleep. So try adopting some practicum in the evening that includes reduced artificial lighting. That will increase your body's relaxation response and is one



of the best things to treat insomnia or sleep related issues.

Another thing you can do is drink warm tea before bed. There are certain herbal teas I recommend to clients. You also can drink warm milk. Grandma probably taught you this one but I actually like warm milk and I don't eat or drink a lot of dairy products. If you ever do drink dairy, please drink organic. Organic, grass-fed dairy is probably the best. If you can get it raw in your state that would be the best, not pasteurized, not homogenized. Heat up the milk and then there are some herbs you can put into it. Ayurveda uses some medicinal milk that helps carry those herbs deeper into the body or to areas of the body that need it. If you choose not to have dairy, you can have Almond milk. It also has a calming and grounding effect on the nervous system. So drinking warm milk or Almond milk or one of the herbal teas before bed also can help you get deeper sleep.

Because the Vata and Pitta types need complete darkness, sensory bombardment is one thing that prevents them from getting deep sleep, something as simple as ear plugs and an eye mask can help treat insomnia. So cover your eyes, wear an eye mask, and put your ear plugs in. It really helps turn your senses inward. Listen to your breath and try having a peaceful mind as you fall asleep. That is a huge help for a lot of people.



One of the other things Ayurveda looks at is the layout, the way the energy flows through the room and in your bedroom. Your feet shouldn't be pointing to a doorway or a mirror or you shouldn't be sleeping under jagged beams overhead and things like that. The way, the directions that your body is facing while you're sleeping actually could impact sleep. So, when all else fails, if I have a client who still has problems sleeping, sometimes it's just the organization of their room. There are some tips and basic changes you can make, such as having your head face east or sleeping east to west rather than north and south, that actually are proven to enhance your ability to fall asleep at night.

If you are a Vata type, you have a lot of that air ether element. Or else you just tend to be one of those worrier types who have a lot of stress and tension and you live in a dry climate. That is a recipe for poor sleep. So it could be something as simple as that. That's the root cause, the dry climate. Using a humidifier in your room will help you breath better and keep moisture in your mucus membranes. That actually will help you sleep better. Then, generally speaking, we'll go more into food, but eating fresh food. Canned food, frozen food and leftovers all contribute to poor sleep. So how we treat that problem is just by introducing more fresh, vibrant, energy-filled food into your diet.

Larry: What dietary recommendations would you make?

Alicia Diaz: Generally speaking, when it comes to dietary recommendations for getting better sleep and treating



insomnia, we are looking at the three different body types. So for Vata type, those air ether types, foods to avoid are those that are cold in temperature. You also want to avoid excess raw salad, raw food, cold vegetables, beans, leafy greens and those types of things. You want to avoid gluten and flour-based or any processed type food.

For this type of person you actually want to savor more warm, cooked, well-spiced (but not hot) food and things that are freshly prepared and plant-based. If the person is eating meat, sometimes this body type does need a little bit more protein, it's really important to prepare the protein in a way that is easy to digest because these people can have sensitive tummies. So if there are meats, you want to cook them into a stew. Obviously use only organic meat, hands down, no exceptions. The quality is completely different. So eat more well-cooked soups and stews and one pot meal and not different types of food all at one meal. You want to try limiting snacks. If you do snack, snack on simple fruit like just one kind of fruit instead of a variety, because that is harder to digest. If you're [47:29] to digestion, that person will have a harder time sleeping.

Drink warm tea and avoid cold water, or anything cold in general, for that type of person. Something that is great for them is warm milk or warm Hammond milk before bed. You can put a pinch of nutmeg in it because nutmeg is actually a sleep-inducing spice. That will help you have deeper, more rejuvenating sleep at night. This type of person also wants to have



really healthy oils in their diet. So organic, cold-pressed raw oil; coconut oil; sesame oil; a little bit of ghee is okay, which is clarified butter. All those should be organic, of course, all those healthy cold-press oils, because that person, the air ether type person, tends to be a little dry. So you want healthy oils in their diet and that will help offset and calm the nervous system.

Pitta people, these are the fire element people. They tend towards hyperacidity. So for food, you want to decrease the consumption of spicy food, chili peppers, sour food and citrus. Drastically reduce the amount of coffee they drink as well as liquor, wine, beer and those types of things. Those are going to aggravate sleep at night. Then this person wants to savor anti-inflammatory and alkalizing food. So that looks like lots of leafy greens in their diet, the more greens, the better—that's more alkalizing. They would also want to reduce their meat and dairy intake because those tend to create more acid. They also want to limit their grains.

So they would want to favor dark leafy greens, fresh salads with healthy oils and lime. Lime and fresh herbs such as cilantro are really cooling. The fire type people do great with coconut oil because it's really cooling and it has that anti-inflammatory effect. Turmeric is fantastic in promoting better sleep for this body type it is a very strong anti-inflammatory. I also could list all the spices for all of these body types, but basically cooling, anti-inflammatory food is the diet the Pitta person, or fire person, will thrive on. It will have them getting better sleep at night.



Then the Kapha person, the water-earth element person, they should reduce the amount of heavy foods they eat. They should reduce the amount of fried, fatty foods. Meats and dairy almost can be cut out of their diet. This person actually thrives on more of a raw food diet. They do really well on juicing plants. They do really well with spices, though. They don't want to have cold food. According to Ayurveda, everyone across the board should not eat anything iced or anything cold. It should be at room temperature or warm.

However, the Kapha person will do really well with light food because the water and earth element is so heavy. They do great with a light food diet, things that are a little spicy, things that are a little bright, things that are little raw and rough. These actually can help them lose weight and also not overeat. Having those lighter foods also helps them reduce snoring and sleep apnea.

So, I've give a quick recap for the Vata person, the air element type of person, who tends to be a worrier and have a little more stress and tension. They want to favor warm, well-cooked, easy to digest, healthy, spiced, well-oiled meals. That might look like one pot meal, soup, stews, those types of things, and hot tea. That's the general overview. Then for that Pitta person, the fire type, the perfectionist, the one who tends to hyperacidity, they want the alkalizing and anti-inflammatory foods. So those look like more fresh vegetables. They can eat more salads. They can eat



lots of greens, including condiments such as lime, cilantro, coconut and things that are cooling, such as turmeric.

Then for the Kapha person, you want light, invigorating and well-spiced types of food. They do great on raw foods and a very low animal product diet. They can really thrive with some nice, hot spices that will help stimulate their metabolism and help them lose weight. Those are the three categories for promoting good sleep. Then we talk about other things, such as supplements and herbal formulas. I tried using herbal formulas in my practice, usually as a last resort, or when someone had tried everything and really needed that kick start. I never recommend people use herbs as a first defense because there's a tendency in our society to try reaching for something. But all of the healing answers you need come from within. It's all about getting your body tuned back up to the rhythm of the natural world. If you can do that through diet and lifestyle, that's the primary way, and through managing your stress and your energy levels. Then that will bring and reveal all the health that you need from within.

But sometimes they do need a little help and herbal formulas are fantastic for them because the plants actually have intelligence. This intelligence and the qualities of each of these plants awaken the intelligence inside of your own self. So consuming certain herbs in various forms actually does help awaken their intelligence and reminds them how to do what they already know how to do. I always



recommend herbs with those constraints, that we eat them for short amounts of time and that they will not work unless we change our diets and lifestyles. With that said, I will share with you a few incredible herbs that Ayurveda uses in the form of tea because I think that's the safest way to take them. If I get to work with a client, I will do a full assessment and really be able to give them the herbs that are specific to them. Herbs are medicine and we don't want to take herbs that potentially could aggravate something else. So I'll share with you some of the safe herbs in tea form that really do help induce sound sleep at night and help the whole nervous system relax.

There's a tea that one of my favorite distributors creates called Nighttime Tea. It is an Ayurvedic herb company. It uses only the highest quality ingredients that are organic and fair trade and ethical. The company uses an herb called Valerian root, which actually is a Western herb. There's an herb in Ayurveda called tagar, which is a very potent herb that really induces sleep at night. I would only use tagar with someone who is a Vata type, who tried everything and nothing worked. This is a very sedentary herb. It's actually an herb that could have addictive properties. I find the Valerian root actually is just as effective and more accessible in the U.S.

So don't worry about the tagar. I can give you a resource to get a formula that has tagar in it that is called the Good Night Sleep Tea. It was created by one of the Ayurvedic doctors that I studied under.



That's a relatively safe formula but, as I said, it could be habit forming. So I wouldn't want you to start there but Good Night Sleep Tea has chamomile, skullcap and tagar. It would be much easier for you to get this tea called Nighttime Tea. It has Valerian root in place of Tagar and Valerian root is known to help induce deep sleep. It's combined with lavender, which is also a sleep herb, oat straw flowers and the fresh root lime flower and Tulsi. Tulsi in Ayurveda also is the one that really helps calm and relax the nervous system. It also is very hydrating to all of the tissues. It's one of those herbs that is known to give a youthful glow to the skin.

This is a beautiful combination of herbs and Night Time Tea. It's by Pukka and you can get it at Banyan Botanical. As I said, they're very ethical stores and they're very high quality. It is the best source if you're going to use any teas to detox, to help you sleep, to help you wake up or whatever. You always want to make sure you are getting organic and ethically produced herbs. So go to Banyan Botanical because it is a really great, really high quality program the company does. Nighttime Tea is probably my favorite herbal supplement to share with you.

Larry: What lifestyle recommendations would you make?

Alicia Diaz: I'll give you what an individual protocol might look like for a day in the life of someone trying to get more rejuvenating sleep at night. I'll give you this protocol separate from individual, unique recommendations I would give to a client whose body type I know. This is



just a sample day for someone looking to get better sleep, regardless of their body type. First thing, they'll wake up with the sunrise, or even a few minutes before, and they'll sniff the Nasya oil. Then they'll go for a walk or do their exercises and stretching and get the blood flowing in the body and all the channels open and ready for the day.

Then they would drink eight to 12 ounces of hot water with a squeeze of lemon. That will help evacuate the colon. When the colon is clear, the whole body will have more energy. Then that will help you sleep at night. It also goes the other way. If you're not getting good sleep at night it is harder to evacuate colon, but you want to start somewhere. So cleaning out the GI tract first thing in the morning will set them up to get through the day. It's the first thing they're going to do, drinking hot water. I said eight to 12 ounces, but you can have 16 or 32 ounces of warm water in place of caffeine. Avoiding all caffeine throughout the day would be very, very helpful for you, or for this sample person we're talking about.

If mid-afternoon sleepiness hits, you could do Yoga Nidra. It's a process I haven't gone into depth with you about but it's a 20-minute guided visualization. It's kind of like a meditation that is pre-rated as psychic sleep. So, it doesn't give you the feeling of being lethargic or tired, as if you were to take a 20-minute nap in the afternoon. It's actually the system that helps strip away layers of tension in the physical body, the mental and emotional body. Then it drops you down into a really



deep place of rejuvenation and brings you out of it without feeling exhausted. I have Yoga Nidra practices on my website. You can go just listen to a recording. It just helps you rejuvenate in the middle of the day if that low energy hits. Because remember, if you just take naps throughout the day, that's going to prevent you from having deep rejuvenating sleep at night. So that's your mid-afternoon trick if you need it. Some hot tea is great as well.

Then lunch and dinner that day are going to be specific to your unique body type. The food will be in season and it's going to be fresh. It's going to be something that makes you feel light and alive after you eat it, not heavy and clogged and sluggish. It's not going to be processed canned, frozen, or leftover food. It's going to be something fresh with as many plants as possible. Then it will be prepared in a way specific to your body type. Then in the evening you're trying to have dinner as close to sunset as possible, preferably when the light is still out. If it's after sunset, it should be as close to it as possible so you're not eating late into the evening. In the evening, you're limiting your exposure to artificial light and definitely not having any heavy dessert. If you need something in the evening, have Nighttime Tea from Banyan Botanical or something that's going to help your nervous system decompress and get your body ready for sound sleep.

So in the evening, maybe some of those activities would be having gentle music on in the background, turning off the TV and the computer, turning off the



phone, or doing some gentle stretching or breathing or meditation. Gentle yoga practices are great through the evening. It doesn't mean you can't do anything after sunset but just try limiting your sensory bombardment in the evening. The closer you get to bed, try doing things that will prepare your body for bed.

Generally, having an established routine you follow, even if it's just a few little things you do every day, will help cue your body that, "Oh, it's almost time for bed. I'm getting ready for bed." Having that warm tea or warm almond milk in the evening also helps, or the medicated milk we use in Ayurveda. Then you're trying to get to bed as close to 10 p.m. as possible. You can put on your eye mask and earplugs and use the Yoga Nidra techniques if you want to help the body really drop in to a deep state of rejuvenation. Some of my clients who have had insomnia say going to bed makes them nervous. They're anticipating not being able to fall asleep. They're scared of their dreams or that they are going to be tossing and turning and they expect that.

So one of the greatest things you can do is recondition your mind to expect rejuvenation. Be really in the present, do not live in the past, do not say, "Well, this is what always happened before and, my gosh, it is going to happen again. I know it. It's going to happen every day for the rest of my life." Just be present in the now, right now as you're going to bed. If you are having trouble falling asleep, don't start stressing about,



"Oh my gosh, I can't sleep. I'm going to be so tired tomorrow. I can't do it again." Don't start stressing about all the things about you're going to do. Don't start saying, "Well, if I can't sleep, I might as well start writing and doing other things." That's your mind taking control of you. You have a choice in that moment. You can take the reins and take control of your mind.

In those moments, you can condition yourself to say, "Okay. If my mind is awake, I'm just going to watch it. I'm going to watch my breath and my mind does what it's going to do." This is a very basic meditation technique. Watching your breath go in and out of your lungs is a "being in the present" technique. It helps you be in the present moment and pulls you right into the now. You'll start realizing your mind is pulling you into the future or trying to pull you into the past, none of that is real. That path is set and gone. None of that is real anymore. The future is an illusion that hasn't happened yet. It's not real. Just give yourself a gift of coming back into what is real. The only thing that's real in that moment, when you're lying there going to sleep, is your breath.

So just breathe deeply, breathe fully. Learn some breathing techniques that I can share with you during my practice. Learn some breathing techniques that help recompress the nervous system. If you're awake, it's okay. By the way, even if you can't fall asleep on the first day after trying all these techniques, it's okay. These techniques can recondition your mind around a reason, recondition your mind to be present and to



expect sound sleep. Eventually it will happen. If you're awake, you just use the meditation, use the breath, because it still will help rejuvenate your mind and your body. Eventually you will fall asleep. Eventually you will recondition your body and your mind to have deep, rejuvenating sleep. So that is what the day and life of someone who gets amazing sleep at night would look like, according to Ayurveda.