A PERIMENOPAUSE SLEEP WORKBOOK

Steady at 3 AM

21 nights to calmer sleep

A gentle plan for 3 AM wake-ups: calm your body, quiet your mind and dread the night less — 10 minutes before bed, for 21 nights



THE STEADY HOURS @thesteadyhours

WELCOME

It’s 3 AM. Again.

It’s 3 AM. Again. You fell asleep without much trouble, and now you are wide awake: heart a little fast, mind already listing tomorrow, last week and things from 2009. You know you need sleep. That knowledge is not helping.

If this started somewhere in your late 30s or 40s, you are far from alone. Sleep problems are among the most commonly reported changes of perimenopause, and waking in the second half of the night is a classic pattern. You are not imagining it, and you are not “bad at sleeping.”

This workbook does not promise perfect nights. It gives you a plan for the moment you wake up, and small daily habits that research on insomnia supports. Most of the tools come from cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I). In a randomized trial, CBT-I delivered by phone with a trained coach helped peri- and postmenopausal women sleep better. This workbook is a self-guided version of some of those tools, and the workbook itself has not been tested in a trial. Use it alongside your doctor, not instead of them.

How to use this workbook

10 minutes before bed

Each night has a short read, one practice and a few questions. Do it in the evening, not at 3 AM. One night at a time; repeating a night is fine.

Keep your 3 AM card by the bed

You will build it in Part 2. At night your thinking brain is half-asleep, so the card does the remembering for you.

Track lightly

A two-minute morning note in the sleep diary (Bonus 4) shows patterns and gives your doctor real information. Guesses are fine; a free companion app is linked there too.

Expect a bumpy start

Some changes (like getting out of bed when you are wide awake) can feel worse for a few nights before they help. That is common.

Progress, not perfection

The goal is shorter, calmer wake-ups and less dread — not a perfect eight hours every night.

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Before you begin

This workbook is an educational self-help resource. It is not medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, and it does not replace care from a doctor or other licensed professional. It does not recommend or replace any hormone therapy, medication or supplement — talk to your doctor about those. If you have thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out now: in the US call or text **988**, in the UK call Samaritans at **116 123**, in Canada call or text **9-8-8**, in Australia call Lifeline at **13 11 14**. In an emergency call 911 (US/Canada), 999 (UK) or 000 (Australia).

When to talk to a doctor

Talk to a doctor before you start, or soon, if: you snore loudly, gasp or stop breathing in your sleep, or feel very sleepy during the day (possible signs of sleep apnea); you have restless, crawling feelings in your legs at night; you have bipolar disorder or a seizure disorder, or you are pregnant; your mood is low most days; your heart often races or pounds; or you have very heavy or prolonged bleeding, bleeding between periods or after sex, or any bleeding after 12 months without a period. **Get urgent help** for chest pain, fainting or thoughts of harming yourself. Never drive or use machinery when you feel drowsy.

START HERE

Your 3 AM Type

Check every statement that fits you. The group with the most checks is your main type; two close scores mean you're a mix — follow both routes. Everyone still does all 21 nights. Your type shows where to put extra attention.

A Hot Waker

My checks: ☐

- ☐ I often wake up hot, sweaty or throwing off the covers.
- ☐ My wake-ups are worse after wine, a warm room or a stressful day.
- ☐ Once I cool down, I can sometimes drift off again.

B Racing Mind

My checks: ☐

- ☐ I wake and my mind starts planning or worrying right away.
- ☐ I lie awake replaying conversations or to-do lists.
- ☐ I dread the night because of what my mind does.

C Early Riser

My checks: ☐

- ☐ I wake 1–2 hours before my alarm and can't get back to sleep.
- ☐ I'm wide awake around 4 or 5 AM.
- ☐ I go to bed early because I'm exhausted.

D Light Sleeper

My checks: ☐

- ☐ Noise, a partner, a pet or the bathroom wakes me.
- ☐ I wake several times, often briefly.
- ☐ I'm not sure why I wake — I just do.

Your route

A · Hot Waker: Start with Night 17 (heat at night) and Night 16 (caffeine & alcohol). Use the "hot" row of your 3 AM Map (Bonus 3) and mark hot wake-ups in the diary — frequent night sweats are worth a doctor visit (Bonus 5).

B · Racing Mind: Put extra attention on Nights 9, 18 and 19. Keep "Read This at 3 AM" (Bonus 2) by the bed and use the self-talk scripts in Bonus 6.

C · Early Riser: Your levers are Night 2 (anchor wake-up time), Night 6 (not going to bed too early) and Night 15 (light). After 14 nights of diary, look at the optional sleep window (Bonus 7). Early waking that comes with low mood most days is a reason to talk to your doctor.

D · Light Sleeper: Focus on Night 5 (no clock), Night 6 (wind-down) and Night 10 (step out). Use the partner script in Bonus 6 and the 3 AM Map for bathroom trips.

PART 1 · UNDERSTAND YOUR NIGHTS

01 Why 3 AM? What's Really Going On

Perimenopause is the transition before your periods stop for good. It often starts in the 40s, sometimes in the late 30s, and can last several years. Hormone levels don't simply drop; they rise and fall unpredictably, and the brain systems that manage temperature, mood and sleep feel the swings.

Researchers describe several things that make the second half of the night fragile: progesterone, which has a calming effect, tends to fall early; night sweats and hot flashes can wake you; and your natural "wake-up" signals start rising in the early morning hours. Sleep-lab studies also suggest that some night wakings happen without a hot flash.

Then a second layer kicks in: you wake, you worry about being awake, and that worry makes your body more alert. That second layer is where this workbook can help most.

Tonight's practice: Notice your night

Check everything that sounds like your nights right now.

- [ ] I fall asleep fine but wake between 2 and 5 AM.
- [ ] I wake up hot, sweaty or kicking off the covers.
- [ ] My mind starts planning or worrying as soon as I wake.
- [ ] I check the time and calculate how much sleep I have left.
- [ ] I lie in bed for a long time trying to force sleep.
- [ ] I go to bed early or sleep in to "catch up."
- [ ] I'm exhausted in the afternoon and wired at night.

Which two boxes describe me most?

If my nights were 20% better, what would be different in my days?

BONUS 3

Your 3 AM Map

You wake up. **Don't check the time.** Start with **R**: two minutes of long, slow breaths out.

If you feel **hot or sweaty**	Kick off a layer, sip cool water, change your top if needed. Do **R** (long breaths out) while you cool down. No lights brighter than a night light.
If your **mind is racing**	Do **E**: "3 AM thoughts are not 9 AM facts." Write one word on the notepad. Then back to the breath.
If you're **wide awake and frustrated** (feels like 20+ minutes)	Do **S**: go to your step-out spot, dim light, something calm and a little boring.
If you need the **bathroom**	Night light only, no phone, no clock. Back in bed, start again with **R**.
If it feels like **early morning**	Rest quietly. Get up at your anchor time, not earlier — and not later after a bad night.
If you feel **unwell**: chest pain, fainting, trouble breathing, sudden weakness or confusion — or you have thoughts of harming yourself	This is not a sleep problem. Call 911 (999 UK, 000 Australia) now. For thoughts of harming yourself, call or text 988 (US/Canada).

Eyes heavy? **T** — back to bed. Whatever happened, get up at your anchor time.

My own If–Then plans

If	**Then I will**
If	**Then I will**

BONUS 2 · KEEP BY THE BED

Read This at 3 AM

You're awake. That's okay.

Nothing needs fixing right now.

Breathe out slowly — longer than you breathe in.

3 AM thoughts are not 9 AM facts.

If you're wide awake, it's fine to get up for a while.

Rest counts. Sleep comes back when it's ready.

Morning will handle the rest.

Tip: print this page, or copy these lines onto a card in big letters. A night light is enough to read it.

