

The Night Protocol

For the 3 AM wake-up. Print this. Nightstand. Tonight.

1. **Don't check the time.**

It doesn't matter what it says, and knowing only starts the sleep-loss math. The phone stays where it is — nothing on it is part of this protocol.

2. **If thoughts are looping, write them down. Paper, not phone.**

Include a specific time tomorrow when you'll deal with each one — not "later," but "*Tuesday, 9 AM.*" The list is the watch handover: the day shift has it now.

3. **Awake more than ~20 minutes? Get up.**

Dim room. No screens. Do nothing. Go back to bed when you feel sleepy. (This protects what "bed" means to your nervous system.)

4. **Awake but not anxious? Rest without demanding sleep.**

Rest without sleep isn't nothing — your body is recovering even while your mind is awake. Remove the demand, and sleep often arrives on its own.

Nothing is true at 3 AM until 9 AM agrees.

The night gets a vote. It doesn't get the verdict.

If broken nights are a pattern — several a week, for months — that deserves more than a card. Ask about CBT-I (cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia). It's the well-evidenced standard of care, and it works.

Companion audio track: theballastprinciple.com/kit