

Sleep insomnia is staring at the same wall all night. Sleep insomnia is hearing the clock tick when the only other sound is the thoughts racing through your mind. Sleep insomnia is watching the minutes pass, knowing you should have gone to sleep. Sleep insomnia is your accepting you have sleep insomnia

At night, my room became a place where my thoughts had nowhere to hide. The darkness made everything quieter, but somehow my mind became louder. I would close my eyes and tell myself to sleep, but the moment everything around me went silent, every thought I had pushed away during the day seemed to return. One thought became another, then another, until I could no longer tell which thought had started it all. I would remember something from earlier and wonder if I had handled it differently. I would replay conversations, searching for things I should have said or things I should have kept to myself. A small mistake could become a hundred different possibilities. What if I had done something else? What if they thought differently about me? What if I had made the wrong choice? There was never an answer, only another question.

Eventually, my thoughts would stop looking backward and begin looking forward. Tomorrow became another source of fear. I would think about everything waiting for me when the sun came up: school, responsibilities, things I had to accomplish, and things I might fail at. The future was something that didn't exist yet, but somehow I was already afraid of it. I would look at the clock. 1:48 a.m. I would close my eyes again. A few minutes later, I would look again. 1:57 a.m. Then 2:14. Then 2:31. The clock became the one thing I couldn't ignore.

Every tick seemed to remind me that I was falling farther behind. I would calculate how many hours were left until morning, then calculate how much sleep I could still get if I fell asleep immediately. But I never did. The more I thought about sleeping, the more impossible sleep seemed. The clock was no longer just telling time. It felt like it was measuring everything I was losing minutes, hours, energy. I began to fear the morning before it even arrived.

Sometimes, the worst part was knowing that nothing was actually wrong in that moment. I was safe in my room. Nothing was happening. There was no emergency. But my mind didn't need an emergency. It could create one out of a possibility. That was what made overthinking so frightening. It could take something that hadn't happened and make me feel as though I was already living through it. A mistake that was over could feel like it was happening again. A problem that didn't exist yet could feel inevitable. And the present—the only moment that was actually real—was being swallowed by thoughts about everything except the present.

I didn't realize it at first, but I was spending my nights trying to control things that could not be controlled. I wanted to change the past. I wanted to predict the future. I wanted certainty. But certainty was something my mind could never give me. One night, after staring at the clock for what felt like forever, I finally stopped looking away from it. The second hand moved. It didn't hesitate. It didn't speed up because I was worried. It didn't slow down because I was tired. It simply moved forward.

For the first time, I wondered why I had been treating it like an enemy. The clock wasn't stealing my time. It was simply showing me that time was passing. I was the one deciding what each passing second meant. That realization changed something. Not all at once. My thoughts didn't suddenly disappear, and I didn't become someone who never worried. But I started noticing when my mind was pulling me away from where I actually was.

When I caught myself replaying yesterday, I reminded myself that the moment was already gone. When I caught myself worrying about tomorrow, I reminded myself that tomorrow wasn't here. Neither one was mine to live. This moment was. It sounds simple, but it wasn't. Learning to live in the present meant accepting something I had spent so much time fighting: I cannot control everything. I cannot go back and rewrite every mistake. I cannot know exactly what will happen tomorrow. I cannot make time wait for me. And maybe I was never supposed to.

The clock continued moving, but slowly, its meaning changed. At first, its ticking sounded like pressure. Then it sounded like time slipping away. Eventually, it became something else: a reminder. Every tick meant another moment was here. Not another moment to worry about, but another moment to live. I began to notice things I had ignored before—the quiet of my room, the sound of the air moving through the house, the feeling of the blanket around me, and the steady rhythm of my breathing. Nothing about the room had changed. I had.

I stopped trying to force the night to give me something. I stopped demanding that my mind solve tomorrow before tomorrow had even arrived. I learned that sometimes peace isn't the absence of thoughts. Sometimes peace is realizing that you don't have to follow every thought that appears. That lesson followed me beyond my bedroom. I began to understand how often I was physically present while mentally living somewhere else. I could be having a good moment while worrying about what came next. I could be surrounded by people I cared about while thinking about something that had already happened.

Insomnia made me notice how easily life can pass while you're busy worrying about it. I used to think the goal was to make time slow down. Now I understand that time was never something I needed to defeat. The clock would keep moving whether I watched it or not. Yesterday would remain behind me. Tomorrow would remain ahead. But between them was this moment—small, temporary, and completely mine.

That is where the journey changed. I thought I was trying to find a way to sleep. Instead, I found a different way to live. I still overthink. I still have nights when my mind refuses to become quiet. The difference is that I no longer believe every thought deserves my attention. I can let yesterday stay where it belongs. I can let tomorrow arrive when it is ready. And I can stand in the space between them without needing to know exactly what comes next.

The clock still ticks. But now, when I hear it, I don't hear something counting down the time I have left. I hear something reminding me that I am here. One second passes. Another arrives. And for once, I don't need to know where every second is taking me. I just need to be there when it happens. The clock keeps ticking, but I am no longer counting the minutes. I am living them.