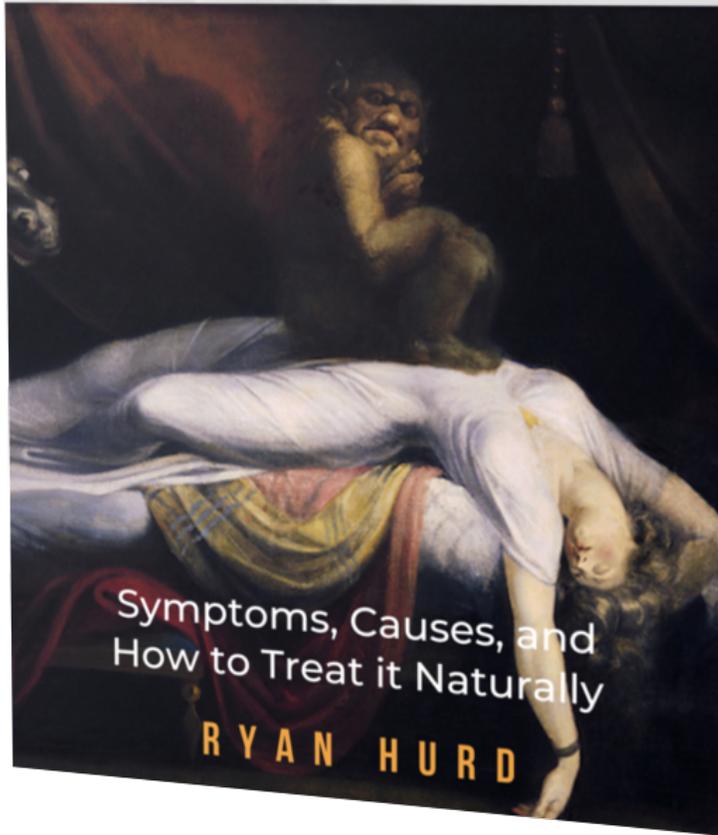


THE  
**SLEEP PARALYSIS**  
**REPORT**



Symptoms, Causes, and  
How to Treat it Naturally

**RYAN HURD**



f all the terrifying dreams, sleep paralysis is the least understood. Its gloomy brothers, the nightmare and the night terror, have finally been teased apart thanks to the work of sleep scientists and dream researchers. But sleep paralysis, also known as the Old Hag or the Incubus Effect, remains the dark and unknown figure in the room.

### **What is sleep paralysis?**

Sleep paralysis (SP) is an intrusion of dream imagery into the waking world, experienced by millions of healthy sleepers as well as sufferers of narcolepsy and sleep apnea. Ordinarily in REM (dreaming) sleep, our muscles are paralyzed as we sleep. According to evolutionary psychologists, this is a feature designed to keep up from living out our dreams so we don't hurt our sleeping partner as we swash-buckle a path through a pirate adventure. But, sometimes, we “wake up” while still in REM paralysis. What follows is a confusing

mixture of waking world perception and dreaming imagination.

**Common symptoms** are:

- feeling unable to move or held down
- pressure on the chest, throat and abdomen
- extreme fear and terror
- pounding heart rate
- strange sounds like buzzing or a crackling paper bag
- bizarre shifts in gravity and body feelings
- as well as breathing difficulties
- feeling a presence in the room
- seeing an apparition, often a nightmarish figure
- being touched by the apparition
- full mental awareness, ie “It was real.”

## The Biology of Sleep Paralysis



*During SP, the mind “awakens” while the body still sleeps*

Biologically speaking, SP is harmless in and of itself; it's perfectly natural if not accompanied by symptoms of narcolepsy or sleep apnea. The muscle paralysis occurs when

our brain is flooded with the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, which suppresses muscle tone in all the major muscle groups that are not autonomic (such as the heart, the intestines, and the lungs). Still, many lose sleep over SP, which contributes to insomnia and actually increases the odds of another SP attack. Terribly ironic, isn't it?

Sleep paralysis can get even creepier, as it is sometimes associated with powerful hypnagogic hallucinations (HH). So although you can feel your body (but not move it), as well as see where you are sleeping accurately, your vision and senses are also filled with dream-like imagery. Known as *REM intrusion*, it's really pretty magical: a hybrid state of consciousness that is like dreaming with your eyes open. However, for many it is not magical at all—it's terrifying because we assume we are awake. Fear increases, driving more dream-based imagery, and what results is pretty much the worst thing imaginable.

## Enter the Stranger

The most terrifying symptom of sleep paralysis is the feeling that someone is in the room. A presence that sometimes cannot be seen, and other times makes itself very clear.

The Stranger, the man with no face, the Hag.

This is where SP and hypnagogic hallucinations merge into a lucid nightmare, leaving sleepers dazed, horrified and scared to go back to sleep for hours afterwards. In Medieval times the Incubus was the demon known to sit on women's chests to molest them. In Hawaiian society, the spirits are known as the *Night Walkers*. In Teutonic lore, the *Doppelganger*. And we can't overlook the fact that many alien abduction tales start with being paralyzed in bed.



*For many, not being able to see the Stranger's face is the most terrifying aspect of SP*

Here's some dream examples of SP/HH that were anonymously recorded from my website [DreamStudies.org](http://DreamStudies.org):

*On several occasions I have felt choked, hit and held down. My throat and vocal cords very paralyzed when I tried to scream.*

*Someone was lying on top of me and I was trying to shout out but could not.*

*Demons trying to possess me. Trying to break my neck, scream in my face, engulf me into a thick damp humid sensation of a God-awful feeling of sinister corruption.*

I personally have experienced sleep paralysis *hundreds* of times. In fact, my first recorded dream is a scary SP encounter that I had at 14 years old. Later, I found many SP experiencers who use SP to visit incredible dream worlds. But, honestly, sometimes it's still scary, and I still use the tips described in this ebook to feel safer and reclaim my sleep.

## The Burden and the Gift of SP

And that's the balm to all these stories of demons, stranglers, and alien abductions. As I now see it, sleep paralysis is an initiation into the dreaming arts. The calling is for light sleepers, conscious dreamers, and those who have thin boundaries, or what researcher Ernest Hartmann has called "vulnerability." The initiation can also come when we are at our most stressed out, as we take on new roles and responsibilities, or are suddenly forced to face existential realities such as a death in the family, or a debilitating sickness of our own.



*Sleep paralysis often comes at difficult crossroads in life*

Others are life-long sufferers who are prone to SP for unknown reasons, perhaps because

it runs in the family. As of this writing, there is no known gene for sleep paralysis attacks, although research indicates that women suffer more than men, and African-American women are especially prone.

Taken together, what all SP sufferers have in common is a *greater ability to be touched by the world*, to experience life and all of its pain, as well as its beauty. This vulnerability is a double-edged sword, pointing towards both creativity as well as increased anguish.

The good news is that SP can be managed, and even cultivated. There are simple ways to lessen SP if you want the attacks to go away. Transforming sleep paralysis into a lucid dream or an out-of-body experience (OBE) is another way to spin this unique hybrid state of consciousness into a new opportunity. But let's not get ahead of ourselves: first it's important to understand why sleep paralysis is being triggered in your life!

## Causes of Sleep Paralysis

Here are some external causes of SP that can be managed through life circumstance

- Keeping an erratic sleep schedule.
- Sleeping on your back
- Increased anxiety—especially social anxiety
- Overuse of stimulants – including caffeine
- Physical fatigue
- Significant life changes
- Medication for ADHD
- Jetlag
- Alcohol before sleep



*First order of business: notice how much coffee you're drinking!*

## **Lessening Sleep Paralysis Nightmares**

So if you want to cut down the sleep paralysis altogether, then first priorities are a more regular sleep habit, less stress, and less caffeine. Easily said, huh? After all, this is the modern lifestyle in a nutshell, and these patterns run deep in our culture. Even if we clean up our diet, we're still busy people. But having an irregular sleep schedule is hard on our bodies. So, as much as possible, go to bed and wake up at the same times.

Another dietary quick-fix is having a light snack before bed, something with carbs and/or protein, but not a lot of sugar. Don't binge on cheese and meat, however: this combination is known for actually increasing bad dreams: it's called the "Pepperoni Pizza effect." If you make some changes in your diet and habits, you should see some serious shifts in your sleep health and SP frequency within a week or two.

## Creating a Safe Home Again: Getting Grounded

Some more ways to cope include adding bedtime rituals that create a “safe place” for sleeping, such as gentle music or aromatherapy an hour before sleep. Also, make a connection to your deep beliefs about the world: where can you “lean against” to help calm you down during fearful

encounters? Having the courage to love can break through the spell of fear in SP. For others,

repeating the scientific truth that “this is normal, I am experiencing REM paralysis” is an effective way to keep fears from spiraling out of control.



*Creating a sanctuary out of your bedroom is key to feeling safe*

In all of these strategies, the theme is *getting grounded*. Because SP has both physical and psychological causes, it can be difficult at first to know the best way to proceed. I recommend keeping a dream journal of your experiences, as well as noting the times you go to bed and wake up, and your diet choices. This will help you make correlations to your personal SP triggers.

Most importantly, make a commitment to get more sleep. And better sleep too. Reducing alcohol and caffeine are a good starting point, but you may have to make new habits at night that allow you to relax and get ready for bed without worry.

Lastly, share your experiences with your partner, family and friends. Discussing the fearful visions will reduce tension and give your community a chance to support you. If you don't want to open up to those who know you best, there are many opportunities to share

your experiences more anonymously online. In fact, I moderate a private Facebook group for this very purpose – [you can join us by clicking here!](#) (Give me 24 hours or so to approve your request, I try not to spend *all* of my time on Facebook...)

## **Reframing Sleep Paralysis as the Gift of Creative Dreaming**

This report is designed to reframe how we talk about sleep paralysis and its related dream states. Sometimes just knowing that the experience does not have to be a nightmare is enough for people to break out of paralysis and explore the amazing dream worlds that are just around the bend. Whether SP is a familiar friend, or a new and unwelcome visitor in your home, the best way to approach these unique experiences is to make room for the uncanny intelligence of this state of mind. What sleep paralysis brings for you is a personal matter, but gaining the courage to meet the unknown will lead to self-knowledge, a greater passion and courage for living your life, and perhaps even some wisdom in the process!

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