

10 Hours of Black Noise to Bring You Peace

Not being able to fall asleep sucks. For several months I was dealing with this on a nightly basis. I'd go to school every morning on either a few hours of sleep or none. My grades were rapidly falling, my social life was nonexistent. Life was like walking through a thick fog. Half the time I wasn't sure where I was, or what the hell was going on.

I tried everything I could think of. 5 milligrams of melatonin turned to 10, 10 turned to 20. I started going for a short run an hour before bed, even when my legs felt like they were moving in a dream. I tried not using electronics past 7:00, I didn't eat past 8:00. No luck.

No matter how groggy, confused, and tired I felt, when I laid down at night sleep eluded me like a song I couldn't quite remember.

When I was able to fall asleep, the nightmares would wake me up and leave me shaking well through the rest of the night.

My dad had taken to drinking to numb the pain, so he wasn't any help. It felt like he was passed out more often than not. I couldn't blame him. I probably would've done the same thing if I had access to alcohol. He would've killed me if I tried to take any of his.

One Wednesday around 1:00 AM when I was closing in on 48 hours of no sleep, I was scrolling through Twitter when one of those promoted tweets caught my eye:

Are you having trouble falling asleep at night? Look no further, YourSleepingFriend is here to help!

Jeez, I thought. Google really is spying on me. But there was a video attached, and my curiosity was piqued, so I plugged in my headphones and hit play.

The video showed an empty beach. In the background, calm blue waves ran up the shore. There were several moments of silence, and then a man began to speak in a low, slow whisper. At each word, the sound switched from my right ear to my left, and the syllables reverberated over each other.

“I’m YourSleepingFriend and I’m here to help you get to sleep. On my channel, you’ll find all kinds of videos dedicated to relaxing your mind. I have nature sounds, ASMR, white noise, and a plethora of other options. Find what you need, and never spend another night tossing and turning.”

I thought the whole ASMR whisper-talking thing he was doing was kinda creepy, but I was desperate, so I clicked the link to go to his YouTube channel and started to sort through the videos.

There were dozens to choose from, but I started off on, “8 Hours of Nature Sounds to Pull You Down”

There were faint sounds of running water, birds chirping, and leaves rustling in the wind. It made me feel like I was in a different world. I didn’t have to worry about school, my dad, or *that night*. The birds were my friends, the water and the leaves were a gentle song lulling me to sleep. After a few minutes, I turned onto my side and closed my eyes.

But in the darkness the sounds seemed to shift and change. The running water was a growling predator, the birds were a horde of crows waiting to make a meal of me, and the wind and the leaves were a menacing whisper in the distance.

Before long I was sweating and gripping my sheets with white-knuckled hands. I opened my eyes and turned off the video.

I took a deep breath. *Come on, man. Just go to sleep.*

But I couldn't. Twenty minutes of lying down with my eyes closed did nothing. I needed something to drown out the silence.

“10 Hours of White Noise to Help You Drift Away”

I could see why they called it white noise. It reminded me of T.V. static, yet this sound seemed to take up more room in my head, like there was some sort of smoke attached to it. It was slowly flowing through my ears and into every crevice of my brain.

For a moment there was nothing except the sound. I relaxed a little and closed my eyes. But in the instant I did, for just a fleeting second, I saw white inside of darkness. Like I was inside of an empty word document.

And then for just a split second, there was a whisper. Soft and calling to me, I was sure of it. But I wasn't able to make out the words.

With a sharp gasp, I opened my eyes.

My heartbeat hammered in my chest. I sat still, as if the slightest movement would set something off. I couldn't shake the feeling that the sound, the smoke, was an invading army. And that the whisper was a warning.

I ripped the headphones from my ear and turned off the video.

The dark does funny things to your mind, I told myself. Especially when you haven't slept in two days.

I checked the time on my phone. *2:00 AM. If I go to sleep now I can still sleep for four hours.* I closed my eyes once more.

In the dark, eerie silence the memories came flooding back. The screams. My mom lying in a puddle of her own blood. Her eyes, open, but void of life.

Wind whispered through the branches outside, and I remembered how slowly the front door had creaked open, how I'd assumed it was my dad. I didn't wanna get in trouble for being awake so I stayed in my room. I'd just woken up, and the fog of sleep temporarily left the fact that he was away on business shrouded.

No more of that, I thought, coming back to reality.

I wanted to get up from bed and flip on the light, but it seemed so far away. I'd have to pass the void of uncertainty that was the shadows under my bed. I couldn't help but feel that there was something under there waiting for me, that there was some sort of sound, but one that I couldn't quite hear. I couldn't get up. I grabbed my phone once more.

I was already on the channel. Figured I'd try another video. One of them had to work for me. Afterall, the thoughts hadn't come back until I stopped, right?

"10 Hours of Black Noise to Bring You Peace"

This video had no apparent sound, but rather, white letters over a black background. It read simply, "Black Noise." The text faded away, and the video began to transition through slides like a powerpoint.

What is black noise?

It is no noise...

Silence...

But I think you'll enjoy the silence...

The darkness...

Maybe you'll find peace...

If you give it a chance...

I felt my stomach rise in my throat. My breaths came out rapid, short, and sharp.

10 hours of black noise starting in....

5

4

3

2

1

I closed my eyes, not sure if it was voluntary or not, and saw myself from the eyes of an observer. A different me, floating in a space of infinite darkness. My eyes were closed and there was a smile of pure bliss on my face. My breaths were slow, rhythmic, and relaxed. I was asleep.

This version of me was sinking into the darkness slowly. So slowly that it took me several moments to notice. I smiled. I was happy for him, and my breaths began to match his. My consciousness began to fade as sleep pulled me in.

And suddenly I was falling so fast that I could feel the wind pulling around me.

My feet landed on cool white tile floor. A kitchen. I looked around at the wooden cabinetry, mahogany dinner table, and the light blue walls. It wasn't just a kitchen. It was my kitchen.

It was some sort of lucid dream, and though I'd never experienced anything like it, the familiar environment made me feel comfortable.

And then there was that whisper again. Coming from the other side of the wall—the living room. This time it was a little louder. Loud enough that I could make out the words.

“Come with me,” it said in that low voice, the syllables echoing over each other.

YourSleepingFriend.

I walked into the living room, and was finally met with the source of that mysterious whisper.

He would have been an average looking man, five foot ten or eleven, average frame, but the skin on his face was deathly pale, almost translucent. The closer I got to him the colder I felt.

He wore a tuxedo, and his right hand carried the hook of a beautiful dreamcatcher. The web in the middle was yellow and made to resemble four flowers leaning against each other. At the bottom, four black crow feathers hung vertically. They swung back and forth as he turned and began walking towards my dad's bedroom.

“Come,” he said. And I did.

I followed him through the living room and into the bedroom. The T.V. was on and playing Criminal Minds. My mom's favorite show. The one that had been playing the night she was murdered.

My dad never watched that show. It freaked him out.

This isn't my dad's room, I thought. This is my parent's room. My mom AND dad's room. Back before it became just my dad's room.

I screamed, "NO!" But as I did there was a man's voice from the bathroom, forceful, almost angry. I couldn't make out the words, but I knew it wasn't my father.

And then there were the muffled, horrified screams of my mother. My mother who's mouth had been covered with tape, and who I hadn't found until nearly seven hours after her death.

"You're gonna make me watch!" I yelled, backing up toward the doorway.

He was standing just beside the bathroom door. The dreamcatcher was now hanging from the doorknob. He held his hands behind his back and stared at me patiently as my mother struggled and screamed.

"No!" I screamed again, and this time I turned and ran out the doorway, up the stairs, and into my room.

I jumped on my bed and got under the covers like I was seven again, hiding from the boogeyman and waiting for the sun to come out and save me.

Instead, my alarm was ringing. It was time to go to school.

What a weird ass dream, I thought. But I felt more well rested than I had in weeks. The dream had been terrifying, but at least I'd actually slept through the whole night.

I crept downstairs to get breakfast, careful not to let my dad hear me on the off chance he was awake.

Sure enough, there he was. Passed out on the couch with a dozen empty beer bottles surrounding him. There were pills scattered around too. Those had worried me the first time I'd found him like this, but I'd learned quickly that they were to numb the pain, not to end it. Any spillage was just his drunkenness.

My day went about as normal. Any excess energy the night's sleep had given me wore off by the time I got to school, and I walked around in my typical daze. I didn't talk to anyone, I kept my head down, and I did whatever I had to do to not get written up. When I got home my dad was in his typical spot on the couch drinking beer and watching T.V. We didn't speak to each other, and I went up to my room to play video games.

When it was time to go to bed, as usual, I couldn't sleep. I took my melatonin, counted backwards from 100, but as usual, nothing worked.

Except, I thought to myself. There is one thing that did work.

It did put me to sleep right? And I was sure I'd just imagined all the scary bits: the whispers, the visions, and the dream. The only thing I knew for a fact was that it helped me sleep, if only for a few hours. And I hadn't woken up screaming, shaking, or crying, just a little unsettled.

I threw on my headphones, opened up the channel, and hit play on the video.

There was the intro, the slides, and then the darkness. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes.

Within a few minutes I was floating. Then, the fall. I was in the kitchen.

Then the whisper. "Come with me."

This time I turned the corner and looked into his fading yellow eyes. “Why?” I asked. “Why do you want to make me watch?”

“Not watch,” he said. “I’m here to bring you peace.”

He turned and walked to my parents’ bedroom. I followed. Again, upon entering the room he hung the dreamcatcher on the bathroom doorknob, then stared at me until I approached the door.

I heard the man barking his orders, then the muffled screams of my mom. This time I opened the door and ran inside.

“Mom!” I yelled. She was on the floor with duct tape covering her mouth and a tall man with broad shoulders and a long knife standing over her.

I ran toward the man to tackle him and take the knife, but he was a grown man and I was only sixteen. He threw me to the side with one arm, then stepped toward me and slashed at me with the knife. I dodged backwards and fell crashing against the wall.

My mom took the moment's distraction to stand up and hit him from behind.

Her attempt, however, more or less resembled a penguin attacking a polar bear. He turned and with one swift motion slit her throat.

I let out tortuous screams with no rhyme, reason, or pattern, and as if he’d forgotten about me, the man jumped and turned, then strided toward me.

I woke up when the blade was about an inch away from my head.

My sheets were drenched in sweat, and I was breathing like I’d just run a marathon. In the back of my mind there was the feeling that I’d been close to death. *Real* death.

I have no doubt that those events were real, what I’d gone through wasn’t a dream, but an alternate reality. One in which I had checked on my mother that night. That was what would

have happened if I'd tried to save her. We'd both be dead. It's a dark and desolate realization, but it's the truth. I know it is. It wasn't my fault that she died, no matter how many times I tried to tell myself that it was.

After some time I sat up. The first thing I noticed was the object sitting on my nightstand. It was the dreamcatcher, as beautiful as in my dream. Attached to it was a blue sticky-note. I picked it up and turned it over.

Not a new reality, but a new memory. Your Peace. Use this when you need it.

-YourSleepingFriend

It might not seem like what he gave me was a gift, the vision of my near death at the hands of an intruder, but what he did was answer all the questions I'd asked myself every single day since my mom died: what if I hadn't stayed in bed? What if I had tried to save her? Was it my fault that she died?

It wasn't my fault, and I couldn't have saved her. It was no one's fault except for the man who walked into our house and killed her. Finally, the guilt began to fade away. Not all at once, but it was a start.

I spent a few moments collecting my thoughts, then I picked up the dreamcatcher and walked it down to the living room where my dad lay passed out on the couch.

I placed the dreamcatcher in his lap.

I couldn't give him a new reality, but I could give him a chance to make a new memory. I could, perhaps, bring him peace. Answers. Maybe I could even get him back.