

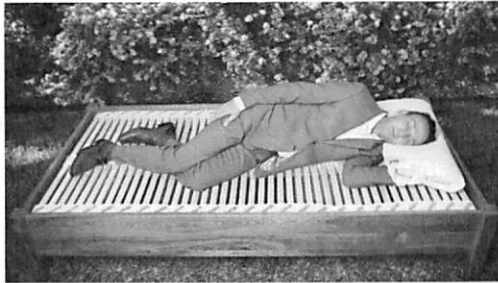
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WORKING LIFE SECTION BY JASON SHEELER

Claus Pummer, Sleep Coach

Formally trained as a furniture maker, Pummer, a native of Frankfurt, Germany, began specializing in bed frames in 1998. His research into bed-design principles led him to a sleep psychology institute in Austria, where he soon became certified as a sleep coach. Today, in addition to owning a home furnishings showroom in Dallas's Design District, he offers in-home consultations on how to attain the best sleep possible.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JUSTIN CLEMONS

“Our bedrooms are no longer bedrooms. They are offices and living rooms and playrooms.”

-Claus Pummer

You might not understand why someone would need a sleep coach, but let me ask you something: How well are you sleeping at night? That's the first question I ask people. And 70 percent usually say something like, “I get about five hours,” or “I can't sleep more than two hours at a time.” I tell them to give me an hour and they'll sleep better.

When a client hires me, I go and visit their house. I have to take a look at their bedroom. I have to get an understanding of literally *how* they are sleeping. I pay attention to the direction they face when they sleep. I recommend that the head is north and the feet are south, but I've found that most people sleep east-west. And here's what else I've learned: most people don't even know which direction they're sleeping in. And, really, they don't even know what a good night's sleep is. So yes, they need a sleep coach.

I also measure a lot of stuff in their bedroom: the temperature, the humidity, the noise level. I look at their curtains, whether they have them or not or what quality they are. I take a look at what color the walls are—pale pinks and blues make for the best sleeping environment. I start counting all the electronics in the room—the phones, the 52-inch television, any iPods, iPads, or Kindles that might be in there. Anything that emits a frequency I look out for. I look at how many mirrors are on the walls too. Mirrors reflect more than light; they reflect radio frequency, which comes from cellphones and cellphone towers. People often don't even know when they live close to a cell phone tower. *[Article continues on back.]*

Then I pull out my electro-frequency meter. That's usually when clients start getting nervous. I'm measuring electromagnetic frequency that comes from power lines and anything plugged into the wall. And I'm looking for radio frequency. I'm also measuring Wi-Fi signals. The numbers are usually very, very high. This is when the tough part of my job comes in. All the electronics in the bedroom have to go.

Our bedrooms are no longer bedrooms. They are offices and living rooms and playrooms. I tell my clients that bedrooms are only for sleeping. But I hear this over and over again: "I watch TV before I go to bed." "I read email before I go to bed." "I read books on my Kindle in bed." "I work in bed." That's the biggest one. "But I have to work," they tell me. Overworking doesn't help, especially when we extend daytime into nighttime. You don't even know anymore when you're at work and when you're in bed.

Not only is the brain overstimulated just before sleeping, but our bodies get confused. It's all about the light. The minute the sun goes down, you should not be working on anything with a computer screen. The theory is that melatonin production is affected by the blue light from the screen on your devices. The light travels through your eyes and then blocks the production of melatonin. You need that to sleep.

I know this sounds crazy, but it's common sense. It's *nature*. Our bodies have a day switch and a night switch. When we wake up, there is light coming through the curtains, and when the sun rises and it hits your eyes, the cortisol hormone is produced. And, importantly, that's when the melatonin production stops. This is the ideal way to wake up, by the way. No alarm clock. So the opposite is true, I think. You cannot sleep at night after the exposure to all that light. You have to be strict with your light habits. If you're getting all this artificial light late at night—and that includes the e-readers—it's very hard to sleep. You are much better off just reading a real book.

This inner switch you cannot play with too much. We live with the sun and the moon. There is a year, a month, a week, a day, an hour, a minute, a second. It's all cycles. This is the way we are meant to live. And our devices mess with this. These electronic products that are supposed to be making our lives better are making them worse. Follow the law of nature. Because if you don't, you can get sick after ten or twenty years of bad sleep. Think about it. If you sleep, say, five hours a night, that means you are missing three hours a night. Over a year, that's more than a thousand hours. Over ten years, more than ten thousand hours.

Here's some free advice: After sunset, turn off your smartphone; you have to get ready for your good night's sleep. Do a little light exercise, take a shower, read a book, and recharge your organs. You cannot improve the way you sleep with less than that. It will not work. Really unplug and let go. And pay more attention to your bedroom. Ask yourself, Is this truly a bedroom? What kind of lighting or noise exposure do I have? People really need professional help in their bedroom. And I don't mean interior designers, even like me. Designers will buy you lots of stuff, but those are the wrong people to ask. They're worried about how things look. They don't care about sleep. Neither does your doctor.

Everyone goes to doctors to get better sleep. But here's the thing: the doctors never ask what the environment is like in the bedroom. After working with me, if you do what I say, you won't even need an alarm clock. And you know what—people in Dallas really like this—you'll look younger too.

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