

The Unknown Killer

Sleep Apnea

My Story

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- Introduction -



Image: <https://www.pexels.com/@tatianasyrikova/>

I want to share with you what I have learned to live a **happier and healthier life**

Hello, my name is Jon Sumida. I am a 5' 5", 135 pound former sleep apnea sufferer, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) sufferer to be exact. Did you know that most people who have a sleep apnea condition, don't realize

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they have it? Have you ever woken up in a sweat and with a headache, **not feeling like “yourself”**? or fallen asleep during the day? or sleep apart from your partner because one of you can't get good sleep? or often wake up in the middle of the night? or have insomnia? If so, you may have a condition called “sleep apnea”.

Apnea means “no breath” and OSA is a sleep disorder characterized by repeatedly stopping and restarting breathing. When I hear my own recordings of OSA events, I feel like I am drowning ... gasping for air ... over and over.

I used to wake up in a bad mood and sometimes angry or depressed and didn't know why. My blood pressure used to be extremely high. There were days that I just wanted to cry and stay in bed. Looking back, I believe that sleep apnea was a major cause of these issues and that my condition started when I was twelve (12) years old.

Sleep Apnea is a cause for cancer, stroke, brain changes, and organ failure, among other preventable tragedies. It is an **“unknown killer”**.

My hope is that you will keep reading, learn something that can help you, and find relief for yourself.

Best Regards,

Jon Sumida

- Chapter 1 -

I want to provide you with some statistics on the disorder.

- Approximately **30 million** people in the U.S. have sleep apnea
- **At least 80%** of individuals with sleep apnea have not been diagnosed
- Sleep apnea affects **1-10% of children**
- Nearly **40%** of Americans report accidentally falling asleep during the day at least once in the past month
- Nearly **25%** of couples sleep in separate beds due to sleep disorders

These are some of the possible effects on your body from sleep apnea.

- Type 2 Diabetes
- Stroke
- Brain changes
- Cancer
- Kidney Failure

- Hypertension

The following is a list of some of the symptoms of the condition.

- Loud snoring
- Episodes in which you stop breathing
- Gasping for air during sleep
- Awakening with a dry mouth
- Morning headache
- Difficulty staying asleep, known as insomnia
- Excessive daytime sleepiness, known as hypersomnia
- Difficulty paying attention while awake
- Irritability

This is a sample of some of the health costs related to sleep apnea.

- Diabetes
 - \$124,600 when diagnosed at age 40
 - \$91,200 at age 50
 - \$53,800 at age 60
 - \$35,900 at age 65

- Cancer
 - Average costs for treatment run in the \$150,000 range

This is a list of personal costs due to sleep apnea. If you have the condition, you are missing out on increased productivity and wealth.

- Employees who gain one (1) additional hour of sleep per night, get a **16% increase** in their wages.
 - \$50k -> \$58k
 - \$100k -> \$116k
 - \$150k -> \$174k
 - \$200k -> \$232k
 - \$250k -> \$290k
- When sales teams used their sleep optimization program, sellers who reduced their sleep debt saw a **50% increase** in outbound call volume and an overall increase in revenue.

- Chapter 2 -

In 2012, I had a serious incident that scared me. I was driving to work and **fell asleep at the wheel**. When I got to work, my manager asked me some questions and I could not understand what he was saying. This is when I knew I had to do something. I ordered a medical sleep study and discovered that I was a severe sleep apnea sufferer, it showed that my oxygenation went down to 80%. When a person is breathing normally, that number is 98-99%. What this means is that my brain was not getting the oxygen it needed to function normally.

The normal way to solve sleep apnea is to use a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine, which forces air into your lungs, using a mask and air compressor. I tried this solution and could not get sufficient sleep because of the noise and discomfort.

In 2024, a major manufacturer of CPAP machines “reached a \$1.1 billion deal to settle claims from people

who say they were injured”. The FDA made a statement in the article below:

The agency said in a [letter to Philips in 2022](#) that the foam also "may degrade and/or emit harmful chemicals, potentially resulting in toxic and carcinogenic effects and other significant harms to device users," listing formaldehyde and other volatile organic compounds, or VOCs.

<https://www.npr.org/2024/04/29/1247774390/cpap-philips-sleep-apnea-injury-lawsuit>

I am glad that I chose not to use one of those machines. Instead of using a CPAP, I did research and created my own solution. During that period of my life, I spent lots of money, most of which **did not consistently help**, if at all. I tried a medical device that was supposed to pull my tongue forward, a device that kept my lower jaw forward, and a device from Japan that strengthens the “smiling” muscles. I also tried many different kinds of pillows. I tried to strengthen my jaw muscles, I tried chinstraps, and many other “solutions”.

Looking back, it is a seemingly simple problem. Your throat opening is a certain diameter and there are associated parts of your body that cause your throat opening to close down. The problem is complicated by many other variables.

I discovered some interesting things throughout the process. First, I found that food and drink allergies can play a part in partially closing down the throat area. Alcohol and milk products create congestion in my system.

An aspect of my sleep apnea was caused by my **orthodontics**. I was born with an underbite, which means that my tongue naturally grew to a certain length that fit my lower jaw. When I had orthodontic work in Junior High, they “fixed” my underbite, which moved my lower jaw back and ultimately, squeezed my tongue into a smaller space. Since my tongue couldn’t go backward, it was somewhat “accordioned” meaning that it took up more volume in my mouth and reduced the throat area opening. I believe this is when my sleep

apnea started. I remember waking up sweating after that. This is around the time that my bad breath started with something which I later learned was called “tonsil stones”. Pieces of mucus get trapped near the back of the throat and eventually become putrid and cause **extremely bad breath**.

The throat opening can be reduced by a number of factors, that is what makes this condition so complicated. It isn't just one thing. For my own body, I have found that bad posture has a major effect on sleep apnea as the jaw slides backwards more easily during sleep. Another factor for me is that I have short legs and for as long as I can remember, I always had to slouch in a chair so that my feet could touch the ground. This caused my neck to “fuse” over many years. I had to “release” my neck muscles and joints in the spine using a back and neck stretcher so that the bones in my neck didn't curve forward anymore. Once I did that, it became much easier to achieve good posture.

I think the number one thing that caused my severe sleep was lifting increasingly heavier weights. I was straining to reach a higher goal and my jaw would clench down, decreasing the throat opening area. In addition, it caused my bad posture to be even more pronounced.

I have found that when I had sleep apnea, my hands felt very weak when I awoke. My resting pulse was typically in the 80s. My blood pressure was in the high 150s to low 160s when it was severe. I also noticed that my sense of smell was lessened and my “happiness” factor when I awoke was **non-existent**. As soon as I woke up, I would “jump” out of bed and never had the urge to yawn or stretch or want to slowly wake up.

When I get excellent sleep, my blood pressure goes down to the 110s and my resting pulse is in the 50s (I have not changed my diet at all and I still enjoy the tasty and salty foods I have always enjoyed). My hands feel strong and I wake up groggy with a strong urge to do a few yawns and stretches in bed. I spontaneously

feel like smiling, for no particular reason, after waking up.

I discovered a smartphone application called **SnoreLab**, which has been invaluable in helping me do more research and create a better understanding of sleep apnea. I highly recommend this app (or a similar application) that allows you to record, listen to, and analyze your sleep.

The following are some exercises that I have created, which help manage the OSA condition.

Exercises

- Palate Stretching
 - *mitigates upper palate collapse*
- Tongue Stretching
 - *moves the lower jaw forward*
- Upper and Mid-Back Strengthening
 - *helps to reduce strain on tongue and jaw*
 - Squats with special hand positioning
 - Lying on stomach muscle toning for my back

- Lying on back muscle toning for my back
- Jaw Muscle Strengthening
 - *mitigates the tongue from sliding backwards while sleeping*

Now, I use a three-prong system to get consistent, calm sleep. It involves:

(1) the daily exercises described above

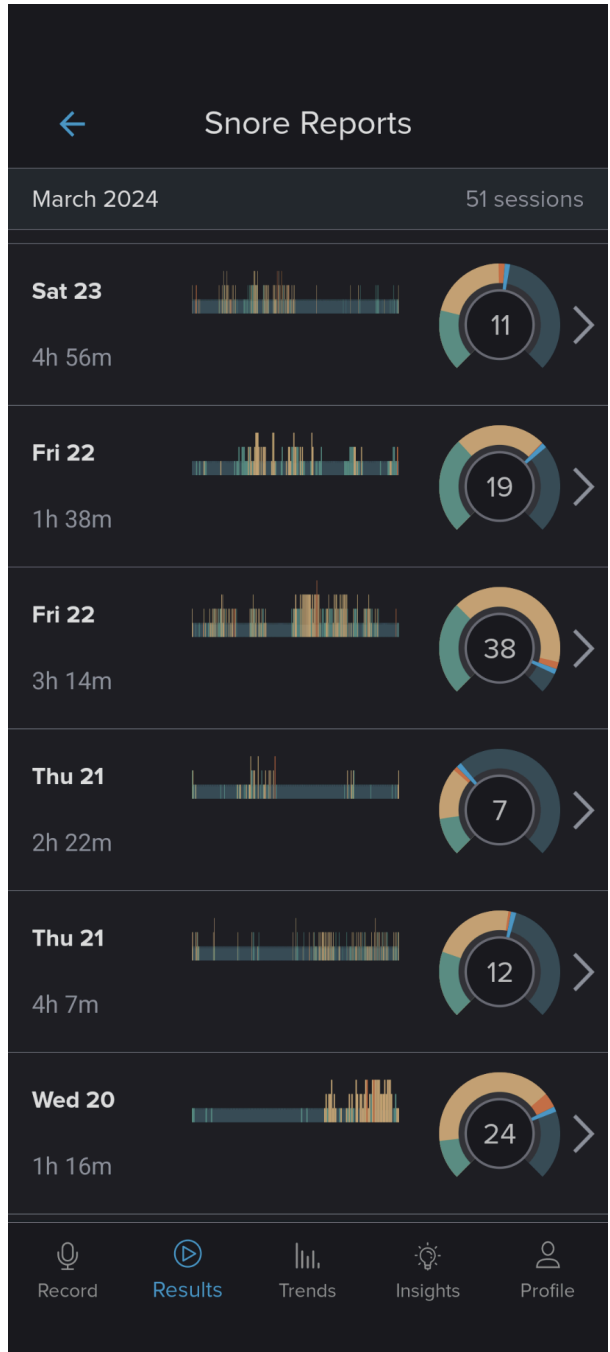
(2) a diet that:

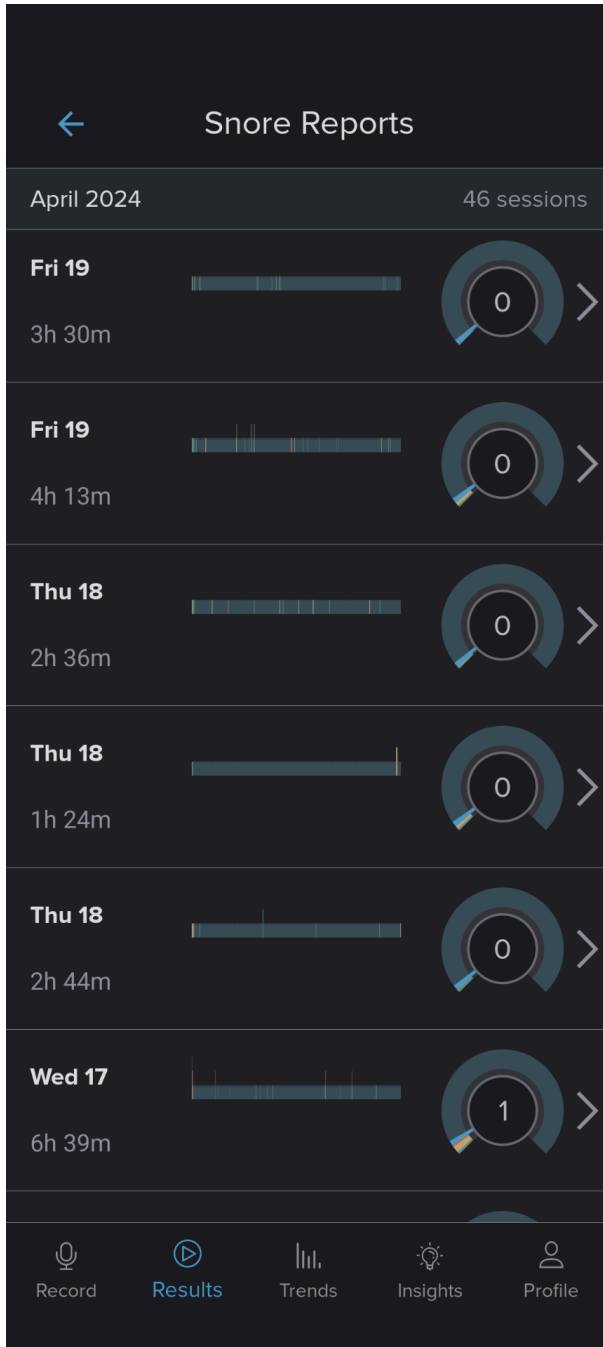
- minimizes intake and the effects of allergic foods
- chinese herbs to reduce congestion
- incorporates the philosophy of **“eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, dinner like a pauper”**

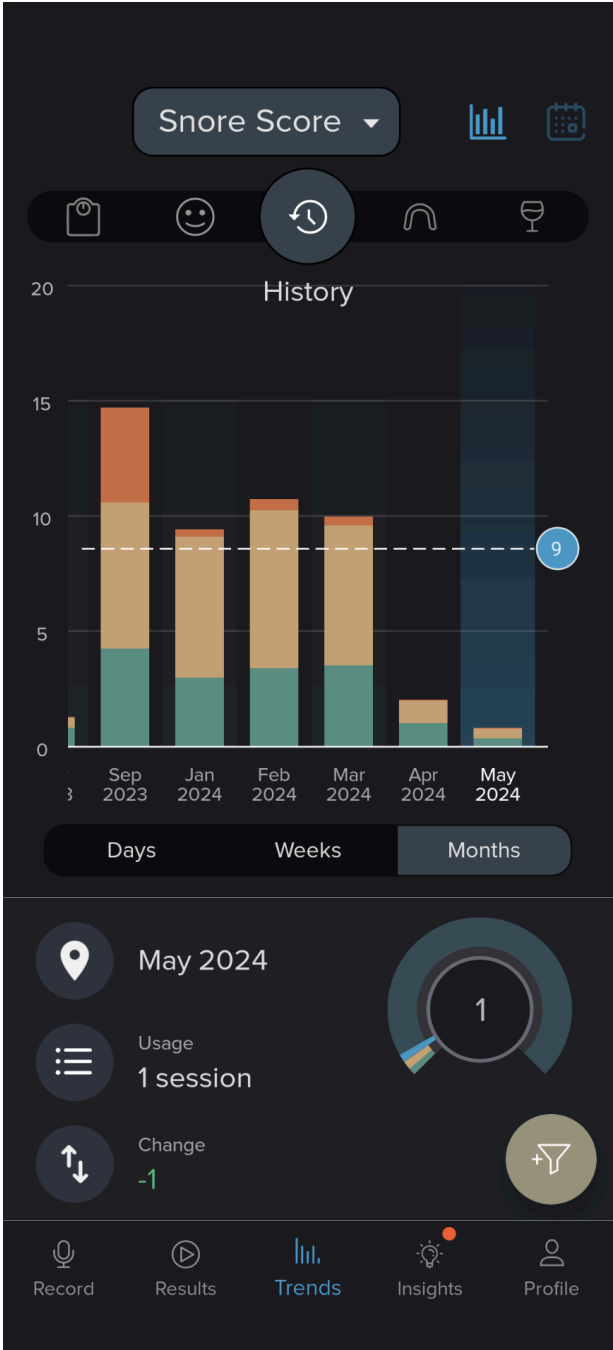
(3) a specific sleep configuration using three pillows.

To compare my previous and current sleep, I included snapshots of my snore scores for March 2024 (prior to using my system) and for April 2024 (after I started using my complete system). I also included a graph of

my sleep history from Sep 2023 - May 2024, using the SnoreLab application. A lower score represents better sleep (see below).







Looking back on my sleep history, I think the most difficult part of the journey was the emotional ups and downs. When I first created my exercise regimen in 2013, I would get decent sleep and then occasionally get not so good sleep. I assume that is common for most people. However, when you have had severe OSA like me, I experienced a dread that I would go back to horrible sleep all the time.

There would be moments when I would say or do some faux pas socially and think to myself later, why did I say or do that. It was because of sleep apnea. I would think, why can't I be more like my true self. It was the sleep apnea.

That is why the complete system I created in April 2024 is so powerful. It gave me a **consistent** baseline of near-perfect sleep and then all of the benefits I saw earlier became part of me. I felt like "myself" again. The emotional ups and downs smoothed out. They still exist, that is just a part of life, but now the magnitude of those shifts are manageable. I am able to process

information differently, to not get “stuck” in a certain way of thinking, and able to absorb emotional blows easier. Here is a list of observations that I have seen when I am getting calm sleep:

- increased happiness
- more confidence
- less anxiety
- heightened feeling of emotions
- better memory
- better self awareness
- increased ease with being more social

- Closing -

If any of this interests you, go to my website for more information.

<https://www.unknownkiller.com>

References

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- <https://www.drugwatch.com/health/sleep-apnea/statistics>