



Dental *entrepreneur* Woman

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# **A TALE OF RESILIENCE**

Tonya Lanthier

## **SLEEPING BEAUTY**

Lisa Moler

## **THE PRACTICE OF JUGGLING**

Kristin Nickells

### **PLUS:**

*The Winning Entrepreneur Of Today*

*See Yourself - Love Yourself - Be  
Yourself - Respect Yourself*



# SLEEPING BEAUTY



By Lisa Moler

**S**LEEP. It's our escape, our refuge, our fountain of youth, our everything ... well, except when it's NOT.

Five years ago, I couldn't escape the same recurring nightmare. I would awaken a few nights a week in terror sweats that someone was choking me! I was literally waking up choking, out of breath, shaken and exhausted, I would remind myself to breathe, that I was OK and just having "that nightmare" again. Turns out, I couldn't have been more not OK.

I was tired. I mean really TIRED. Like the kind a two-hour nap just won't shake. Like falling asleep at my desk at 3:30 in the afternoon at my computer, every-day exhausted. I was fatigued, in pain, cranky as all get-out (think PMS on steroids ... my poor hubby). I thought I was literally dying. I had to function during the day. I owned a business. I was a publisher responsible for three magazines with crazy deadlines. I needed some serious help!

It's not like I hadn't been going to doctor after doctor trying to find help. I mean, I think I saw just about every specialist under the Arizona sun and had every test known to man. Was told that it was my age, my hormones, I was depressed, over-worked-change professions, take some pills! UGH!!! Finally, my knight in shining armor shows up. Enter, of all people, a chiropractor?!? Lack of sleep makes your back (and just about everything else) ache really bad. Mine felt like it was on fire. I had never seen this doctor in my life, and I thought, "Meh, let's add him to my growing list of docs who probably won't help me." After I completed his extensive paperwork, he enters the room and bluntly blurts out, "I'm not going to even touch your back today, you have OSA (obstructive sleep apnea). I can tell by

your answers on your intake forms and just by looking at you, that you have it. Go get a sleep test ASAP!" My first reaction was, "Who does this guy think he is, talking to me like this?" Was he just in a huge hurry, wanting to shut down early to go golfing, perhaps? His curt, direct attitude just wasn't sitting well with me at all. Some straight talk, possibly tough love from Dr. back-cracker? In retrospect now, I must chuckle to myself thinking how I was definitely the queen of da-nile. ;)

Well, guess what? I had that awkward overnight sleep test (I will save those hilarious deets for another column, on another day), but damned if he wasn't right! The test revealed I was waking up 26 times PER HOUR during the night. The equivalent of being poked awake 26 times in 60 min period, when I was just on the verge of falling asleep ... poke, poke, poke. NOT cool. Not a horrible case, but moderate, bordering on severe and enough to keep me feeling horrible and non-functioning on a daily basis.

I was mad. Maybe more frustrated than mad. Having been in the dental industry for years, and having seen my dentist every three months religiously for cleanings, exhibiting signs of bruxism and airway issues, why hadn't he caught this for me years ago? Instead of blaming, it became clear to me what my new mission was. Publishing three specialty journals within dental and flirting with the OAT (oral appliance therapy) topic while putting out articles in my ortho mag made me think. We must have an OSA, dental-specific publication that educated dentists to diagnose and treat this debilitating condition! It's a misnomer that OSA is just for obese, hairy, 300-pound men. Women of perimenopausal and menopausal age are being diagnosed at an alarming rate with this condition. Yes, the darn hormones and aging have something to do

with this, ladies. Sigh.

The first line of treatment for OSA always seems to be the CPAP. Now I'm not going to CPAP bash here, but the facts are this: 50 percent of people are non-compliant with this device. If you have severe OSA, this machine is probably going to be your lifelong friend. But being in the dental industry and knowing that there are other options out there that treat OSA perfectly well led me to trying multiple OAT devices. Let's be real, if there's an effective option to sleep non-tethered, unencumbered, NON-Darth Vader-style, this was going to be my ticket! I joke, but the fact is, whatever the prescribed treatment choice, JUST DO IT (Nike style), and don't give up till one works.

My diagnosis and treatment literally saved my life. A couple of months into getting sleep (for the first time in years), I truly felt like myself again. I do not go a night without my treatment, even when traveling. And as for my hubby? He's OH SO happy, because he now gets a good night's sleep, too! OSA treatment has become our soapbox, albeit sometimes obnoxious. We never miss an opportunity to get the point across (think SUPER-intense dinner party discussions amongst friends), but, all joking aside, amidst all of the obstacles in my long road to proper diagnosis, I discovered that sleep really is everything, as it directly effects just about every organ in our bodies, from head to toe, including our sanity.

If there is one fact I hope readers take away from my story, it should be that OSA is a VERY serious, VERY tricky, sometimes silent (snoring is not the only symptom) KILLER. It does not discriminate. Men, women, old, young, fit, not so fit ... there is no single demographic profile for this disorder. Please, if you or anyone you love, exhibit



Interviewing Tony Robbins

signs of OSA, get the test and treat it. Chances are, you will stick around for years to come, to thank them for giving you the push you needed to be yourself again.

I know I sure am. Happy, blessed, present and AWAKE to enjoy and appreciate my life and those I love. What more can we ask for, really?

Sleep WELL XO

#### About the author:

Over the last three decades, entrepreneur and innovator Lisa Moler's reputation as one of the most dynamic forces in the American publishing industry has grown and diversified.

Since 2005, when she launched MedMark, Lisa has been the driving force behind Endodontic Practice US, Implant Practice US, Orthodontic Practice US, and Dental Sleep Practice magazine. As MedMark's CEO/founder and publisher, she guides the company's business strategy, while cultivating business development opportunities and establishing strategic industry partnerships.

Lisa has personally interviewed iconic public figures such as Tony Robbins, Simon Sinek, and Dr. Oz.

Her high energy blended with her extensive sales, marketing, and advertising experience has made Lisa a thought leader in the dental publishing field. Throughout her publications and emedia endeavors, she has built a culture of performance, respect, trust, and collaboration.

