

## Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

The nurse, at last week's checkup, asked me if I ever had any depressing thoughts. I replied the only depressing thought I had recently was thinking about coming to their office, stepping on the scale to be weighed, and then the doctor telling me I weigh too much. I have been practicing something that might help me deal with depressing thoughts and assist in having a good sleep. It started because of something the philosopher Seneca (c. 4 BC-AD 65) wrote:

*The fact that the body is lying down is no reason for supposing that the mind is at peace. Rest is sometimes far from restful.*

I have difficulty getting my mind at peace when I go to bed. I'm not alone. More than fifty percent of Americans sometimes have sleep problems and some of those Americans are pipeliners and some pipeliners work rotating shifts. Consider a practice of self-examination when you lay yourself down to sleep. It could be a way to clear one's mind and to get to sleep more quickly. Sleep is the only proven remedy for fatigue mitigation.

Seneca had this practice:

*Is there anything finer than this practice of examining one's entire day?  
Think of the sleep that follows this self-inspection,  
How peaceful, deep, and free when the mind has been praised or admonished,  
When the sentinel and secret censor of the self has conducted its inquiry into one's character.*

Some nights, I do not consider the examination a fine practice, but it is helpful. It is challenging to quiet my thoughts about what I have done that day and what I will be doing the next day. My thoughts also concern our clients and pipeline controllers who are responsible for pipeline safety. Lately my thoughts have been about how to influence reluctant learners to want to develop their teamwork skills and other non-technical skills.

My censor inquires, and it is better to answer than to ignore. I keep it simple:

What did I do well?  
What could I have done better?  
Who did I help today and how did I help?  
Who did I hurt today and how did I harm?  
What will I do better tomorrow?

Epictetus (c. AD 55-135), some years later, said something similar:

*Allow not sleep to close your wearied eyes,  
Until you have reckoned up each daytime deed:  
'Where did I go wrong? What did I do? And what duty's left undone?'  
From first to last review your acts and then reprove yourself for wretched acts,  
But rejoice in those done well.*

When you next lay yourself down to sleep, practice self-evaluation and see if it helps.