

Week 4
Living in a Mindful Way,
Increasing Sleep, Mindful Eating and Nutrition
Lisa Nathan

Sleep:

Accept days that you will have trouble sleeping. Even having a relaxed night in bed can be restorative.

54321 grounding technique: Our brains take advantage of the quietness at night. No distractions, nothing to take care of, no food. Emphasizes our tendency to live in our thoughts.

No matter if your thoughts are racing during the day or at 3am, anxiety takes you out of your body and out of the present moment. Our thoughts can race and take us to scenarios totally outside of ourselves. And most of these thoughts transport us back to the past or rocket us into the future. But the only place your body can be is in the here and now.

54321 technique. 5 things you can see. 4 things you can touch. 3 things you can hear. 2 things you can smell. 1 thing you can taste.

“Any time the mind dissociates from the moment, carrying us away, reconnecting with the senses can pull us back again.” Anxiety is DISEMBODIED but coming back into your body roots you and helps you manage anxiety,

However, [a recent study published by the Journal of Psychosomatic Research](#) has found evidence that chronic fatigue, without previous indications of mental illness, can result in increased levels of psychological symptoms as well as an increased risk of future psychiatric illness. It would seem that neglecting your sleep is tantamount to neglecting your health.

Try writing - it can bring you out of your head and into the concrete realm. Makes your thoughts actual things that you can look at and explore with more consciousness and awareness.

Emotional Eating:

Cinzia Pezzolesi - Emotional eating: practice loving kindness. Instead of berating - be comforting and available. If you feel a strong emotion that brings on the desire to self soothe with food, set it in your 'lap' and examine it. Don't run away from it. There is power in confronting our fears, anxieties, anger...

Mindfulness Meditation and Improvement in Sleep Quality and Daytime Impairment Among Older Adults With Sleep Disturbances

A Randomized Clinical Trial

CONCLUSIONS AND RELEVANCE

The use of a community-accessible MAPs intervention resulted in improvements in sleep quality at immediate postintervention, which was superior to a highly structured SHE intervention. Formalized mindfulness-based interventions have clinical importance by possibly serving to remediate sleep problems among older adults in the short term, and this effect appears to carry over into reducing sleep-related daytime impairment that has implications for quality of life.

1. Get some Headspace. One of the inspirations behind the launch of [Sleep by Headspace](#) was that many Headspace members said they practiced [meditation in the](#)

evening, including before bed, to help them de-stress and fall asleep. While meditation is not about clearing away or stopping thoughts, it is about learning to be more at ease with your thoughts and more compassionate to yourself and others. In this way, mindful meditation can reduce stress, and help pave the way for good night's rest.

Waking up in the middle of the night (or in the middle of a sleep cycle) and being unable to fall back asleep is a common sleep disorder called sleep maintenance insomnia.

2. Try a relaxation exercise There are several different types to choose from. Harneet Walia, MD, a physician at the Cleveland Clinic's Sleep Disorders Center, suggests progressive muscle relaxation, a meditation-based technique. Starting with your toes and working up to your forehead, tightly tense each of your muscles for five seconds, and then slowly let them relax. Do one leg and one arm at a time, and pay special attention to areas of your body that hold tension, like your jaw and neck.

Integrative health specialist Dr. Andrew Weil recommends a 4-7-8 breathing exercise, which he says serves as a "natural tranquilizer" for the nervous system, helping to ease you back to sleep. The goal is to slow down your breathing, which forces the rhythm of your heart to slow as well, relaxing the body and mind. To start, place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue behind your upper front teeth for the exercise. Then:

- Completely exhale through your mouth, making a whoosh sound
- Keeping your mouth closed, inhale through your nose for 4 counts
- Hold your breath for a count of 7
- Exhale completely through your mouth for a count of 8
- Repeat this process 3 more times for a total count of 4 breath cycles

If the counting and holding are too complicated, any type of deep, slow breathing can have a calming effect and help you fall back asleep. One simple way to do this is to lie in your bed on your back, legs extended, and arms at your side. Imagine your lungs are balloons, and take the deepest breath you can, filling the balloons, then exhale completely, deflating the balloons. Repeat this as many times as needed/as is comfortable.

3. Put your worries on paper Often, sleeplessness stems from worry, and at 2 am, without any daytime distractions, our minds can easily shift into overdrive. Many sleep experts recommend keeping a pen and pad on your night table or by your bed, so you can commit your worries to paper. No matter what you're obsessing over, rather than ruminating, write it down. This takes the commotion out of your head so you can let it go, clearing your mind. Just make sure to keep the lights dim (or use a flashlight or nightlight) when jotting down notes, as bright light can disrupt your body clock.

4. Listen to music You don't need scientific studies to tell you that listening to music can quiet your mind and help you relax, but here it is anyway. Research shows that music can have a direct effect on the parasympathetic nervous system, encouraging your body to relax and prepare for sleep. It can slow your heart rate and breathing, lower your blood pressure, and even relax muscles — the biological changes you experience when you're falling asleep.

5. Meditate to help fall back asleep Meditation helps to increase the prospect of getting you back to sleep by igniting the parasympathetic nervous system, lowering the heart rate,

and encouraging slow breathing. Just putting aside 10 minutes to do a simple breathing meditation before bed can help you get off to sleep quicker because it creates a buffer between your waking life and your bedtime.

If you're having trouble falling back to sleep, try meditating in bed, lying flat on your back with your head on the pillow. Or start a [Headspace wind-down exercise for sleep](#), and take a few deep breaths, relax your body, and close your eyes.

When we try meditation or a wind-down exercise with sleep in mind, it's important to relax and take some deep breaths to release any tension. And then, as you exhale, feel the weight of your body sinking down into the mattress, feeling the contact between your body and the bed — from the heels of your feet to the back of your head. Allow the mind to drift off in its own time, letting thoughts go, and maintaining a relaxed focus on the natural rhythm of the breath. Anytime a thought pops into your head, simply return to the breath to anchor you in the land of Nod.

6. Try getting out of bed Many sleep specialists recommend getting out of bed after about 15 or 20 sleepless minutes (your best guesstimate, since you're not looking at the clock, remember?). The more you lie in bed feeling frustrated, the more your brain associates the bedroom with not sleeping well, and the more you'll come to anticipate sleeplessness the next time you're there. Go to another room and try something relaxing, like listening to music or reading. A warm bath or shower may also help, as the change in body temperature before going back to a cool room should help get you drowsy.

A final thought on falling back asleep

One thing sleep doctors agree on: falling asleep should be effortless, and trying too hard can backfire. One specialist, [Dr. Dev Banerjee](#), recalls asking a patient what he did to fall back asleep, "The guy said, 'I say to myself, I must fall asleep, I must fall asleep!'" And of course, the result was the opposite. "So I suggested that he repeats silently to himself, 'I must stay awake, I must stay awake.'" He tried it, and it actually worked."

Tomek: I choose to have a deep restful sleep tonight. Comfortable position. Back, side, stomach. Be patient with yourself as your body gets comfortable. Bring to mind thoughts, emotions, anything that happened today that may be in the way of your mental relaxation. It's okay if the thoughts are unpleasant. Start being aware of your breath. Every time you breathe in you take in fresh energy and every time you breathe out you feel a release. Your out breath is like a wave, capable to carrying away any emotions and thoughts that are still in the way of your full mental relaxation. As you breathe in, take in fresh energy and as you breathe out, let go of all of those energies that get in the way of your relaxation. Imagine that you can release them through the bottom of your feet. Feel the heaviness of your body to cross between the wake state and the dream state. Feel the softness of your bed. You are safe and protected.

Meditation may also:

- increase [melatonin](#) (the sleep hormone)
- increase [serotonin](#) (precursor of melatonin)
- reduce heart rate
- decrease blood pressure
- activate parts of the brain that control sleep

Your body experiences similar changes in the early stages of sleep. As a result, meditation can promote sleep by initiating these changes.

Release judgment or expectation. Allow yourself to unwind and rest.

Podcasts: Sleep with Me. Sleep Meditation Podcast.

Insight Timer app/free meditations

Yoga Nidra for Sleep - Jennifer Piercy

Relaxing Within - Pablo Arellano

Theta Waves/ Delta Waves - various

Deep Sleep Music - Aaron Darrell

Body Scan for Releasing Stress - Human Evolution

Full Body Relaxation for Sleep - Memory Lane

Bedtime Tales - various