

Sleep Relaxation Techniques

Many people develop a mental or physical relaxation technique which they use regularly to induce sleep. The more you practice a technique, the more effective it will become, and the quicker it will induce sleep. If you normally practice some sort of alert relaxation or meditation during the day, it is recommended that you develop a different technique to induce sleep.

Counting

Inhale, then exhale and count 1.

Inhale, then exhale and count 2.

Continue in this manner from 1 to 10, one count for each exhale, then count backwards from 10 to 1 in the same manner. Repeat the sequence until you sleep.

Alternatively, count backwards from 100 on each exhale.

Sensory Scan

As you are lying in bed, gently focus your eyes on a spot on the wall or ceiling in front of you. Keep your eyes softly focused forward, but be aware of the range in your field of vision (your peripheral vision).

In your mind, name five things that you see. (in the present time)

Then name five things that you hear.

Then name five things that you feel (can be a tactile sensation or an emotional feeling).

Then name four things you see.

Four things you hear.

Four things you feel.

Then three...

Then two...

Then one...

At this point, you can stay there and shut your eyes and let your thoughts drift, or you can go back to five and start over.

Losing track or losing count is good—it means the technique is working.

It's O.K. to repeat – for example to name the dresser mirror every time you list what you see.

Body Scan

Allow yourself to relax in a comfortable sleeping position.

Focus on how your body relaxes into your exhale.

Beginning with your head and moving downward, focus your attention on your body, noticing any tension, allowing the exhale to relax you.

Identify any sensations—any tension, warmth, heaviness, coolness, the heartbeat, stomach gurgles.

Once you have made it down to your feet, allow your mind to freely wander through the body, noticing the sensations as they ebb and flow, as the mind gradually becomes quieter and sleepier.

Focus on the Breath

Relax in a comfortable sleeping position and focus on your breath. As you become more and more relaxed, focus on the exhale and notice sensations of sinking down, slowing down, heaviness, etc. After you become deeply relaxed, visualize your breath as a color flowing in and out of the body. Notice if it stays the same color, or changes. Allow the body to breathe itself and sleep will come naturally.

Progressive Relaxation

In a relaxed position, focus your awareness on the muscles in the toes of your left foot. Think about relaxing these muscles. Move up to the muscles in the arch of that foot and think about relaxing those muscles. Move up to the top of the foot, the ankle, the calf, the knee, etc.

Once you have completed the left leg, bring your awareness to the toes in the right foot and go through the same process, relaxing the muscles with each exhalation of the breath. Once you have moved up the torso, focus your attention on your left little finger, and scan each finger, the hand muscles, the arm muscles, etc. at a slow pace, relaxing with each exhale. Continue upwards after the arms to relax your shoulders, your neck, your skull, all the individual muscles of your face.

Keep your focus inward—don't feel you have to complete the whole exercise.

Allow yourself to drift into sleep any time the body and mind are ready.