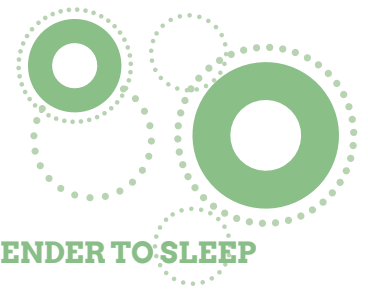




7 STRATEGIES FOR SERENE SLEEP



1. RITUALIZE THE RHYTHMS OF ACTIVITY AND REST

- Create an energizing ritual with morning light exposure and exercise.
- Learn to rest during the day with meditation and breathing practices.
- Maintain a regular sleep-wake schedule, even on weekends.
- Develop a soothing evening ritual as a bridge to sleep.

2. USE DUSK AND DARKNESS AS SLEEP MEDICINE

- Simulate dusk: dim your lights for a couple of hours before bed.
- Always use blue light reduction technology to watch TV or use computers.
- Slow down with warm bath, journaling, rest practices, yoga, and intimacy.
- Consider melatonin replacement therapy as needed and sleep in total darkness.

3. QUIET YOUR BODY NOISE

- Avoid “counterfeit energies”— caffeine, sugary foods, and adrenalin.
- Carefully check for possible sleep side effects of all medications used.
- Check your alcohol intake— drinking less, earlier, and with food is best.

4. CREATE A SLEEP SANCTUARY

- Keep your bedroom cool (68 degrees or less), dark and quiet during sleep. may be helpful.
- Gradually move toward a more “green” — organic and natural — bedroom.
- Get electric clocks and other such devices away from your head and bed.
- Do all you can to feel psychologically safe in your bedroom.

5. LEARN TO SURRENDER TO SLEEP

- Avoid the chemical knockout of sleeping pills and alcohol.
- You cannot literally “go to sleep”— practice “letting go of waking.”
- Approach getting to sleep as a personal spiritual practice—an act of faith.
- Consider using natural sleep aids such as lavender and valerian, if needed.

6. DON'T BATTLE NIGHTTIME WAKEFULNESS

- Go to bed only when you feel sleepy.
- Never watch the clock from bed— it pulls us back into the waking world.
- If you can't sleep, get up, sit in a comfortable spot until you're sleepy again.
- Use nighttime wakefulness as an opportunity to meditate or pray.

7. ARISE MINDFULLY WITH INTENTION IN THE MORNING

- Obtain at least 20 minutes of daily exposure to morning light shortly after arising.
- Awaken slowly and explore your grogginess in the morning.
- Let the memories of your dreams come and note them.
- Set conscious intentions to guide your waking day.



AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO SLEEP

Here is an expanded, integrative approach to sleep hygiene, which is not meant to be applied mechanically, but implemented as a part of a personalized, soothing evening ritual.

- Be mindful of the **basic rhythm of daily life** by establishing a regular bed and rising time, obtaining exposure to early morning light and evening dim light, and maintaining regular times for meals and exercise. You should avoid napping if you have insomnia.
- **Manage caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and other drugs.** Caffeinated foods and drinks can affect some people up to 12 hours later. Even if you do not think caffeine affects you, it may be interfering with the quality of your sleep.
- Although regular and adequate **cardiovascular exercise** promotes healthy sleep, it should be **avoided at least 3–4 hours prior to bed** because it raises your core body temperature, which can interfere with sleep.
- **Avoid high glycemic and harder to digest foods as bedtime snacks.** As an alternative, consider complex carbohydrates (e.g., whole grains, lentils, beans) that may help transport tryptophan, a precursor to melatonin, across the blood-brain barrier.
- Create a **healthy sleep environment** by keeping the bedroom cool (about 68° F), completely dark, quiet, psychologically safe, and green. Use HEPA filtration for clean air and, whenever possible, organic and non-toxic bedding.
- **Avoid clock watching at night** since it draws you back to waking consciousness. Ideally, position the clock away from the bed or use a non-illuminated battery operated clock to avoid light and subtle EMF radiation.

- **Manage hyperarousal and anxiety with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and body-mind techniques.** CBT, which is more effective than hypnotics over the long term, addresses sleep-related dysfunctional thoughts and beliefs that trigger arousal. For some, self-help workbooks may prove helpful. CBT is best coupled with body-mind techniques such as mindfulness meditation, muscular relaxation; heart rate variability, neurofeedback, selfhypnosis, breathing exercises and guided imagery.

- **Manage bed and bedroom stimulation,** which can condition these areas for wakefulness, by using the bed only for sleep and sex. Minimize wakeful time spent there by going to bed only when sleepy and getting out of bed with extended period (15–20 minutes or more) of nighttime wakefulness until becoming sleepy again.

- **Ask your clinician about using a botanical supplement,** such as valerian or hops, for sleep for a short term. Melatonin is useful when there is advancing age and/or circadian irregularities. Always use supplements with other sleep hygiene recommendations.

- Understand that **letting go and surrender** are key in sleep onset. In the end, we cannot finagle sleep. We can set the stage and be receptive to it, but we cannot intentionally “go to sleep.” Efforts to do so typically backfire.

