



Sleep Series - *Natural unwinding before bed.*

SEQUENCE GUIDE: SESSION 3

The Mind - Flip the Switch

Instructions: Keep a journal/pad of paper and pen near your bed. Write down three things you are proud of.

Explanations: Words we think and speak have an impact on our mind and body. Instead of thinking about your to-do list or the constant worry about unresolved issues, **Flip the Switch**. Think of 3 things that you are proud of yourself. (Usually the first three things that come to your mind.)

Thinking about being proud of yourself reinforces encouragement, appreciation and respect to oneself instead of berating oneself. This creates a release and brings expansion to the mind. This is not disregarding our problems. This is just redirecting our focus to what is working well or what we appreciate in our life. Creating this pattern over time will indicate to our mind that it's now time to unwind.

The Body - Squeeze and Relax

Instructions: Lie down and make yourself comfortable on the floor or on your bed. Using pillows to prop under your knees and head if necessary to prevent any strain in your lower back or neck.

Squeeze all your muscles in your entire body from your head, to your feet and out to your hands. (While squeezing, think of tightening all the tiny muscles in your face, torso, arms, legs, glutes and feet.)

Squeeze for 15 seconds and Relax for 10 seconds.

Repeat this 4 more times.

Explanations: When we are dealing with a lot of stress oftentimes that tension can stay in the body and diminish our quality of sleep. Contracting and relaxing our muscles releases tension in the body. This technique allows us to reach areas we may not even realize we were holding tension..

** If you are dealing with a respiratory issue or a heart condition please consult with your doctor before doing any breathing exercises.**

The Breath - Belly Chest 'Wave' Inhales

Instructions: Lie down and make yourself comfortable. Put a pillow underneath your knees if necessary and have a blanket on or nearby in case you get chilly.

For Beginners- Practice these sets.

First set:

To start, place one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest.

Begin with a slow belly breath inhale while gently raising your hand. Then do a very long and steady exhale while gently lowering your hand that rests on your belly.

Do 2 more rounds of Belly Breath inhales and long steady exhales.

Second set:

This set you will add in the chest inhales.

Begin with a very slow belly breath inhale filling up the belly and then shifting the rest of your breath to fill up your chest. Notice the 'wave like' motion that lifts the hand on the belly and then lifts the hand of the chest.

Then do a very long and steady exhale while gently emptying out all the air out of your chest and belly.

Do 2 more rounds of the Belly Chest 'Wave' Inhales and long steady exhales.

Third set:

This set you will add 2 regular breaths at the end of this cycle.

Begin with a very slow belly breath inhale filling up the belly and then shifting the rest of your breath to fill up your chest. Notice the 'wave like' motion that lifts the hand on the belly and then lifts the hand of the chest.

Then do a very long and steady exhale while gently emptying out the air out of your chest and belly.

Pause.

Take a regular paced inhale and exhale

Pause.

Take a regular paced inhale and exhale

Do 2 more rounds of Belly Chest 'Wave' Inhales, long steady exhales. Then pausing between two regular paced inhales and exhales.

Fourth set: Do 4 rounds of Belly Chest 'Wave' Inhales, long steady exhales. Then pausing between two regular paced inhales and exhales.

Fifth set: Repeat fourth set

For Non Beginners (When you are comfortable doing this exercise) - start here.

First Set:

Do 4 rounds of the full Breathing Technique: Belly to Chest inhale, Exhale everything out. Pause. Do one regular inhale and regular exhale. Do a second regular inhale and regular exhale.

Second Set: Repeat 4 rounds of the Full Breathing Technique.

Third Set: Repeat 4 rounds of the Full Breathing Technique.

Fourth Set: Repeat 4 rounds of the Full Breathing Technique.

Explanations: When we are under duress we breathe short and shallow breaths. Over time this type of hampered breathing becomes our default. I've seen this with my bodywork clients through the years time and time again. Most of us are unaware that our breathing patterns are stunted. We can improve our breathing patterns with conscious breathing. Why do we want to do that? Well there are two main reasons for our sleep. The first one is when we slow our breath down we can stimulate our Vagus Nerve which turns on our parasympathetic system for "Rest and Digest". The second reason is we want to provide an adequate amount of rich oxygen to our cells and vital organs. This aids in our waste removal and digestion. Sleeping is the time our body repairs itself. The added bonus with the belly breath is it also massages our internal organs.

Recommendations:

Try to do an unwinding sequence for at least 1 month to build your own bedtime routine. ***(If need be, you can start small with only one technique for 10 mins a day and then work your way up.)*** You should start to notice a difference. Remember this is a practice. This winding down sequence is a baseline. The more frequently you do it the easier it will become. Once your body starts to get into the relaxing pattern before bed the less time you need to unwind. For example; you may need to start one hour before bed. Do the unwinding sequence for 30 mins then do some light (non stimulating) reading for 30 mins. Later on you may only need to do 30 mins before bed with just the unwinding sequence. Lastly, you may shift into only needing 15 mins before bed and only doing one technique.

What happens if I wake up in the middle of the night?

It's ok. Sleep comes in waves. You can set yourself up to catch the next one. What you want to break away from is ...laying in bed being completely frustrated you are not sleeping and becoming more and more irritated you can't fall asleep. You are working away from associating sleep with stress.

Options for unwinding in the middle of the night.

1. Leave the room, read something (non stimulating) until you feel more relaxed. Come back to bed and do the belly breath chest "wave" inhale breathing.
2. Write down all your thoughts in your journal/pad of paper. Then write down 3 things you are proud of. Next start the belly breath chest 'wave' inhale breathing.
3. Listen to a sound bath.
4. Do an entire unwinding Sequence 3 with Mind, Body and Breath.

More tips for better sleeping

*Finish eating a meal at least 2 hours before bed. (If you must eat during that time period aim for a light snack.)

*Finish screen usage at least 1 hour before bed.

*Prep for bed (shower, brush teeth or put pjs on, etc) before starting the sequence.

*Keep your room dark and cool to aid your body for an optimal sleeping environment.