



Better *Brain* Health

with MELISSA DEALLY

Sleep Workshop Handout

6 Steps To Better Sleep

Step 1: Let your body know it's time for bed

Create a bedtime routine with at least 4 steps that you do at the same time every night, letting your brain know that you are getting ready for bed, so it can start producing melatonin to help you sleep.

Some suggestions:

- Wash the dishes
- Tidy up the house from your day
- Turn off lights and shut doors
- Turn off devices and power down
- Do some yoga / gentle stretching / meditate
- Shower / bath / wash face / brush teeth
- Change into pajamas

Add possible supplements: Magnesium Glycinate and/or Vitamin C

Step 2: Isolate the Bedroom for sleep

Set up your bedroom, so it's only used for sleep, reading, light conversation and intimacy, never for work, TV/movies, or scanning facebook!

Tips:

- Keep a tidy bedroom
- Have dark curtains, but open them as soon as you wake up
- Keep the room temp between 18-20C
- Turn off any wi-fi or electronic devices – you don't need them when asleep!
- Remember for every hour you are on a device, melatonin production is suppressed or 30 minutes after you get off.
- Use blue light glasses or “night shift” on your phone / tablet, and download <https://justgetflux.com/>

Step 3: Do not lie awake for more than 30 minutes

Do not look at the clock, but estimate 30 min, if you've been lying awake that long, go to exercise 1:

Exercise 1: Leave your bedroom, turn on a light and find something light to read for 15 minutes. Then try going back to bed and to sleep, when your mind is more relaxed. If that still doesn't work after 30 minutes go to exercise 2.

Exercise 2: Sit on the edge of your bed, let your arms flop down beside you, let your shoulders stoop and let your head hang forward, with your chin close to your chest. Breathe deeply through your nose, and then slowly exhale through your mouth. Continue this exercise for a few minutes, while really visualizing your breath coming into your body and exiting your body. While you focus on your breath, your mind can't think about other things and will start to relax. After a few minutes you should start to feel relaxed and sleepy. If you are still struggling listen to binaural beats to help you drift off.

Step 4: Wake up at the same time each day (for minimum 30 days)

In order to re-set your sleep/wake cycle you need to commit to waking up at the same time every day for 30 days. Use an alarm clock during this time, to ensure you really do get up at the same time and you need to commit to getting out of bed and opening the curtains when the alarm goes off, not to hitting the snooze button. Regardless of what time you go to bed, get up at the same time every day. When the brain starts to realize it's waking time, it will want 8 hours of sleep ahead of that, and that will help you with falling asleep in the evening!

Step 5: Do not look at the time

Turn the alarm clock away from you when you go to bed. Looking at the time, just creates sleep anxiety, as you worry about the sleep you aren't getting. Instead follow step 3 if you can't get to sleep, and if you wake up in the night, let yourself fall back to sleep again, instead of wondering what time it is and how much sleep time you have left.

Step 6: Do not obsess over sleep

Obsessing over sleep simply results in sleep anxiety and lost sleep, there is no benefit to it. If you have a bad night sleep, oh well, try again the next night and follow these steps. Worrying about it makes it worse, and doesn't bring back the lost hours. Try to catch negative worry thoughts, and stop them. Instead choose to focus on all the positive steps you are taking to help yourself get better sleep. Like anything, you get better at it with practice.

Sleep vs Rest:

Sleep is one type of rest, our physical rest, but it is also important to understand the other types of rest our body needs and build time for these in your week as well, as this also helps boost your physical rest.

Mental rest – your brain needs a rest – we run commentary from morning until night, how do we let our brain rest?

- 1) A Meditation, breathing or yoga practice when you focus to concentrate on being present and slow the running commentary in your mind. A great free app I like for meditations is called “insight timer”. You can also use Headspace, Calm, Mindshift (Chill out tools) or Breathe. All free to download, but some have in-app purchases.
- 2) Time block activities that ping ping ping at your focus, or eat away your time– tv, email, social media, menial office tasks, news – and limit how much of this you do in a day, so you have more time to let your mind rest, and get through your day in a lower stress state. You can block an hour at the start of your day, after lunch and perhaps 30 min before you go home, to do email and close your email at the rest of the day to be focused on more important projects, and in doing this, your brain remains calmer as it’s not constantly switching back and forth.

Emotional rest – you experience emotional rest when you no longer feel the need to meet the expectations of others. We have an internal capacity to manage emotions, and when we constantly give of ourselves, we are depleting it – what are you doing to fill it back up?

- 1) **Be emotionally aware** of how others’ emotions affect you. If you go to work in a good mood and by lunch are feeling depressed, it’s an indication you are encountering negative emotions in the workplace. Or if you feel anxious around someone, and don’t when you are away from them, it’s time to evaluate the effect that relationship has on your emotional health.
- 2) **Stop comparing** – be your authentic self, trying to “fit in” is emotionally taxing
- 3) **Risk Vulnerability** – this is hard, but so worth it. In doing so you will find others like yourself, that feed your emotional piggy bank instead of draining it.

Spiritual rest – You are made up of body, mind and soul. Life can be hard though, and at times we only focus on 1 of these parts of us, not all 3. Spiritual rest happens when the broken pieces mend so we can become whole again.

Increase your spiritual rest by: meditation, prayer, journaling to bring all parts of you back together. Explore your relationship with the Universe, with your spiritual side, to find peace and flow in life, and a new form of rest.

Social rest – who are the people you spend the most time with? Some relationships are restful and others are not. For those that are not, can you establish boundaries around them to protect yourself? We are social beings, Isolation and loneliness are the 2 most common forms of social restlessness.

- 1) **Prioritize face to face time** – this provides closeness and comfort you can’t get through a device
- 2) **Listen and Learn** – We have 2 ears and 1 mouth, but often use our mouth more.

- 3) **Nurture your need to connect** - find your tribe that you feel naturally connected to. What is your passion, join a club that does that – being around those people will lift you up, that is an active, restorative form of rest. You alone know the right amount of social interaction needed, so that you stay energized, and don't cross the line to depletion. Be mindful of finding this balance.

Sensory rest – Our brains process so much, through our eyes, ears, nose, mouth and touch....constantly all day long. Just close your eyes and think about your favourite beach, smell the ocean, feel the warm sand between your toes and the sun on your face, the wind in your hair. Hear the roar of the waves, touch the sand, or the salt on your skin. All of this is using your senses and brain processing energy!

To invite sensory rest you can:

- 1) **Unplug** – set aside some time each day to completely disconnect from technology. The most stressed out people are usually those who are the most responsive to technology.
- 2) **Not all sensory responses are equal** - spend some times finding sensory stimulation that is relaxing to you – smells, music etc.
- 3) **Identify and target triggers** – remove, or counter their effect on you.

Creative rest – this is the rest you find when immersed in creative beauty, whether that be in nature, or at an art museum, or listening to a classical concert. This type of rest is not just for creative people, we ALL need it. This is NOT about putting demand on your creative ability – that is not rest – it is about focusing on your basic need for wonder.

Increase your creative rest by:

- 1) Build time into your calendar over the next few weeks to engage in activities that will rejuvenate you. Create a loose plan (so you don't waste away the time) and go on a hike and explore, visit a museum, sit in a café and just people watch....
- 2) During very busy or stressful times, set breaks and timers in your phone every 90 – 120 minutes (for twenty minutes to make sure you enjoy some creative rest, allowing you to be more productive when you get back on task)
- 3) Work with your circadian rhythm – studies show that you should do your cognitive work in the morning, as after lunch you are more likely to be distracted. Creativity tends to peak in the evening. Adjust your schedule to what works best for YOUR rhythm.

You now have all the steps, if you would like the added accountability of a 30 day sleep challenge to re-set your sleep wake cycles, you can sign up for my 30 day sleep challenge. It includes an app to keep you on track, send you reminders to start your bedtime hygiene routine, stay hydrated, and build in other forms of rest. You can register here:

<https://app.acuityscheduling.com/schedule.php?owner=16592598&appointmentType=9260529>