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relaxation strategies

simple strategies that may help
boost relaxation and sleep

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Relaxation Exercises

There follows some simple strategies that you can use if you want to relax or calm the mind.

You can also use the second strategy if you find it difficult to fall asleep, or to get back to sleep if you wake during the night, particularly if you find that your mind won't switch off.

1. Counting Backwards.

Decide how long you want to do this for. Clients have said that doing this for just one or two minutes helps them feel calmer. You can do it for longer; 5, 10, 30 minutes, whatever works for you.

It may be helpful to start with a shorter period, and do it for longer periods as you get better at doing it. Set a timer if you want to keep track of time.

As you breathe in, count 300.
As you breath out, count 299.
As you breathe in, count 298.
As you breath out, count 297 etc.

Keep doing this for the time period.

If you find yourself thinking about things again, become aware that you are thinking about something, let that thought go, and go back to the counting.

If you lose your place, choose a number to continue from, and continue counting.

If you get to zero, just start again from 300.

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2. Finger Technique

Focus on the little finger on one of your hands.

As you breathe in, say a word to yourself in your head. It can be any word at all:

Peace, calm, trust.

As you breathe out, say another word to yourself in your head.

So as you breathe in, you might say: Peace

As you breathe out, you might say: Calm

Alternatively as you breathe in and out, say a very short phrase in your head:

I am calm and peaceful

It doesn't really matter what you say, although it's better not to focus on sleeping, or say 'I must relax'.

As you breathe in again, at the beginning of the breath, focus on your ring finger on your hand, and repeat the words or phrase as you breathe in and out.

Repeat for middle finger, index finger and thumb.

When you get to your thumb, go back to your little finger and repeat whole sequence.

Keep doing this over and over. If you find yourself thinking about things again, just stop doing that, and go back to using this technique.

Many clients report that using this technique has helped them, including clients who have experienced insomnia for years.

Other Strategies For Sleep

1. Stretching

If you feel like you are wide-awake, it often can be helpful to get up and spend 5 minutes or so doing some gentle stretching. Obviously you may have to go to another room if you are sharing a bed!

2. Write it down

If you have lots of thought going through your head, particularly if you are thinking of tasks you need to do, it can be useful to write it down, so that you have noted it, and don't need to be trying to remember it. Writing in a notepad is deemed to be better than using an iPad or smart phone, as it is believed that the light from the device in close proximity may stimulate and awaken.

Also, spending some time before you go to bed writing down your thoughts may be helpful to help you process the day. (See Helpful Habits document in Downloads section).

Disclaimer: This information should not be taken to constitute professional advice or a formal recommendation, and is not intended to replace the advice and treatment of a physician. Any use of the information set forth is entirely at the reader's discretion.

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