

Sleep Tip Index

Full Body Breath	5
Toe To Head Relaxation	6
Rock-a-bye Baby	7
Satnam	9
Visualization	10
Sending Thoughts	11
Memorized Texts	12
Prisoner's Cinema	13
Physical Interventions	14
All Day Sleep Tips	15

How to Fall Asleep Naturally

An Insomniac's Guidebook To
Ancient Yogic Sleep Tricks

–Andrew C. Stone

andrew@stone.com
@twittelator

Before You Lay Down

Scientific research has revealed that our computer devices' screens inhibit the natural formation of melatonin – the sleep inducing hormone – in our brains.

Make a habit of not bringing your phone and tablet and laptop to bed! If possible, cut out the digital stimulation at least 2 hours before bedtime.

Besides your digital diet, what you eat and drink can effect your sleeping pattern. Stay away from caffeine, sugar and chocolate, especially in the evening. When you do snack in the evening, keep it light and several hours before bed to avoid indigestion.

After a lifetime of enjoying caffeine, I decided to see what would happen if I gave it up. It was the worst 2 weeks of my life, but the end result is that I wake up feeling fresh and can fall asleep whenever I want to.

'for Emma and all Thinkers Who Would Rather Be Dreaming'

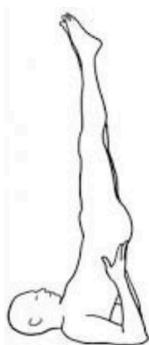
Easy Physical Interventions

If you still can't get to sleep after any of the preceding techniques, it's time to try something more dramatic.

Did you know that simply yawning can trigger a sleep response? A simulated yawn can stimulate an honest to goodness yawn.

A tried and true method of deep relaxation that would allow a good night sleep is the hot bath. The water is calming, take it as hot as you can stand.

And there is always the tried and true inverted yoga poses – either the head stand, or easier for the beginner, the shoulder stand.



You are not alone having trouble falling asleep.

The pace of modern life has increased the velocity at which we live. Everything seems to be going faster and faster, making us feel like there is less and less time to be getting more and more done.

And when we lay our exhausted bodies down at night, the brain keeps chugging along, refusing to stop and let us rest.

Luckily, humankind has been plagued by mental restlessness for a very long time, and effective techniques to relax the mind and body have evolved over the millennia.

This guidebook shows you these techniques – give them a try, and you'll find one or two that work especially well for you.

Although melatonin and herbal infusions of camomile, poppy or valerian root may be useful natural sleep aids, this book is only concerned with something you always have at your beck and call: your breathing and your attention.

While some of these tools emerged from various spiritual traditions, they are effective whether you believe in the supernatural or not – they are scientific in that the results are reproducible and have been proven effective.

Sweet Dreams!

“It's All In The Mind, Y'know”

– John Lennon

To sleep, perchance to dream. Why is it that if we are too rev'ved up, too wired, we simply cannot fall asleep? And worse, the thought, “I won't get enough sleep” begins to initiate a bad feedback loop of increased anxiety.

Don't even worry about the length of your sleep – one good 90 minute ultra deep sleep can refresh you for a day. And when you learn a sleep technique that works for you, you'll be able to take a power nap on demand.

Why did I write this booklet? I've suffered from work and play induced insomnia my whole life, so I've had a lot of experience with ways of falling asleep. My work, software engineering, is very mental with long work hours too close to sleeping. As a result, my mind was humming with code, ideas, and just plain noise when it was time to sleep. Collected here are the techniques that work well for me – and some nights I need to use 2 or 3 of them – so please, mix and match.

Mind controls the body,
breath controls the mind.

is the first thing you need to know. We'll be using words and breath in different combinations. The words are your words. For some of us, the ancient call of Sanskrit and toning vibration of ॐ (OM) works well because it's so pure and simple.

One of these tried and true techniques, or your own variation, will be sure to help you fall asleep quickly and naturally.

Prisoner's Cinema

During the 1960's, researchers into consciousness developed “isolation tanks” – heated pools in a dark room where the participants would be able to deeply relax.

After just a short while, the participants would begin to hallucinate as a compensation for the lack of any other external input.

The brain, when deprived of stimulation, begins its own self-created movie produced by phosphenes. This effect has been known by prisoners for centuries. You effectively watch the movie created by the brain when you close your eyes.

You can place your palms over your eyes to help rest them, and the dark seems to stimulate this effect. Just let the shapes and colors emerge as a passive observer. Peering into our neural image recognition software in action can be entertaining and distracting, which might help you relax and get some sleep.

Prayers and Memorized Texts

When we were young we learned various prayers and texts like the pledge of allegiance, poetry, and songs. You might know the Lord's Prayer or the Shema, or even the Gettysburg Address or Ripple.

It is very relaxing to repeat these texts that are so well known to you that very little effort is required.

You might find yourself already asleep before finishing the first time through.

Full Body Breath

Because breath controls the mind, start with controlling your breath, it's that easy.

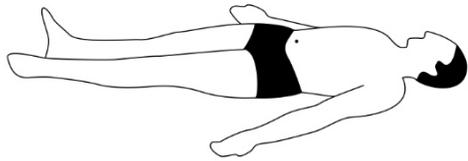
The full-body breath is a great start – it's a long slow breath in, followed by a long slow breath out.

Exhale fully, and then, start slowly filling your lungs from the very bottom, continuing to the heart area, and then keep going until you top off your lungs fully.

Begin exhaling slowly and steadily in reverse order, from the top to the center, then to the bottom of your lungs.

Repeat until you watch yourself drift gently off to sleep.

Toe To Head Relaxation



Lay on your back, with your hands at your side, palms up, feet gently fall outward. Beginning with your toes, say to yourself:

“My toes are relaxing, my toes are relaxed...”

“My feet are relaxing, my feet are relaxed...”

and on up the legs and center:

“My ankles are relaxing, my ankles are relaxed...”

“My shins are relaxing, my shins are relaxed...”

“My knees are relaxing, my knees are relaxed...”

“My thighs are relaxing, my shins are relaxed...”

“My hips are relaxing, my shins are relaxed...”

“My torso is relaxing, my torso is relaxed...”

“My heart is relaxing, my heart is relaxed...”

“My organs are relaxing, my organs are relaxed...”

now the arms:

“My fingers are relaxing, my fingers are relaxed...”

“My hands are relaxing, my hands are relaxed...”

“My wrists are relaxing, my wrists are relaxed...”

“My forearms are relaxing, my forearms are relaxed...”

“My elbows are relaxing, my elbows are relaxed...”

“My shoulders are relaxing, my shoulders are relaxed...”

finally the head:

“My neck is relaxing, my neck is relaxed...”

“My tongue is relaxing, my tongue is relaxed...”

“My eyes are relaxing, my eyes are relaxed...”

“My jaws are relaxing, my jaws are relaxed...”

“My face is relaxing, my face is relaxed...”

“I am completely, totally relaxed.”

Sending Thoughts To Family and Friends

Sometimes, it's quite relaxing to send out well wishes, blessings and prayers to those we care deeply about.

Take a moment to think about each of your brothers and sisters, parents and children. Consider the intricate web of life that binds you to these people.

Continue to extend the web to cousins, uncles, aunts, friends, and even those that are no longer living.

Nested in this vast web, you'll drift off cosily to sleep.

Visualization OM–AH–HUM

Adding visualization to sound is another way to relax deeply. With this simple mantra, there is a visualization added for each syllable, which lasts the duration of a deep inhalation or exhalation:

OM

imagine white light coming into your head

AH

imagine ruby red light engulfing your throat

HUM

imagine blue sapphire light flooding into your heart

HUM is intoned with an 'ng' sound at the end

Rock-a-bye Baby

Here's a simple trick I remember from my childhood. Growing up in the late '50's and early '60's, life was very punctual. To bed at exactly 8pm. Of course, I wasn't tired until 9pm.

I was able to calm myself simply by gently rocking, while laying curled up on one side.

The rocking rhythm is relaxing and helps you relax your agitation.

And humming a lullabye while you rock just might do the trick to send you drifting off into a deep slumber.

The Power of Words

The ancients used to compare our thought processes that seem to run out of control with a 'drunken monkey'. Nothing calms the chatter and the clatter of the inebriated simian better than soothing words.

Which words are not that important – each of us has words that are meaningful to us, and remind us to be aware and awake. In the Vedic traditions of India, a group of words that are repeated over and over again is called a “mantra”.

The words, repeated silently or even under your breath if it helps you pay more attention, create gentle waves which wash over the discombobulated parts of our minds, encouraging us to relax and open fully.

Whether it be Sanskrit, English, Hebrew or any language really, simple phrases with repetition calm the mind. We'll look at a few techniques that combine breath, mantra and visualization to allow you to fall deeply into sleep when you are laying down.

All these same tricks, when sitting upright crosslegged and alert, can help you enter deep states of meditation.

Satnam ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ

If ever there was a place to start with words, it would be in the attentiveness to the sounds of your breath. Slow breath in, slow breath out. Here's an ancient mantra from the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib which consists of two words: ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ (sat nam)

Listen carefully to your breath:

On inhale you hear '**sat**' - everlasting

On exhale you hear '**nam**' - name

Let the two simple words vibrate fully in your imagination. Calm shall embrace you.