



Relaxation Techniques for a Good Night's Sleep

There are a variety of relaxation techniques that can help you prepare for sleep. Practice any of the following to help ease your mind and body before bedtime. If one technique doesn't work, try another. Allow yourself to drift to sleep at anytime throughout the process, whenever your body and mind are ready.

1. Deep Breathing - When you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax, making it an excellent relaxation technique.

- » Breathe in from your mouth and inhale slowly for several counts.
- » Feel the movement all the way from your stomach to your chest and exhale through your lips.
- » Pause for several counts.
- » Exhale slowly for several counts.
- » Feel your breath coming and going as your mind stays focused on your breathing.
- » Repeat 10 times, relaxing more each time.

2. Visualization - This technique helps you use your imagination to reach a calm, peaceful place, relax, and relieve stress. Visualization can reduce stress by creating subconscious positive feelings.

- » Make yourself comfortable.
- » Take slow, deep breaths.
- » Close your eyes and imagine a space where you feel calm and peaceful. For example, a sandy beach, a vacation or holiday, or taking a walk with a pet. Take yourself deep into the imagined environment by noticing the senses associated with it, including sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound.
- » Walk your mind through the various elements within your environment while practicing deep breathing.
- » Hold your visualization for at least three to five minutes.



- » You may also want to try guided visualization in which you listen to a pre-recorded script and mentally follow along. Often after listening to various exercises a few times, you will remember which images helped you relax, and you can use them on your own.
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3. Progressive Relaxation – This involves tensing a group of muscles as you breathe in, and then relaxing them as you breathe out.

- » Start with a muscle group on one end of your body and slowly work your way to the other end of your body, muscle by muscle.
 - » Tense each muscle for about five seconds, and then relax it for about 20 seconds.
 - » Allow your attention to focus only on your body, concentrating on how the tensed muscle and your body feel during the exercise. If your mind drifts, bring your attention back to the activity.
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4. Counting Coupled With Breathing Rhythm

- » Assume your desired sleeping position.
 - » Focus on your breathing, feeling yourself relax with each breath.
 - » As you continue to focus on your breathing, count in sequence from one to 10 and then from 10 to one. Count one number per exhalation and repeat this sequence until you fall asleep. An alternative method is to count backward from 99 until you fall asleep.
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5. Journaling - Take some time prior to bedtime to write down persistent thoughts and worries in a notebook to help remove them from your mind. In addition to any worries, be sure to include three items you are thankful for every day. Journaling can help de-clutter your mind of worries while acknowledging the positives in your life and can help prepare your mind for a peaceful sleep.

6. Sensory Scan

- » Lie in bed in your desired sleeping position.
- » Gently focus your eyes on a spot on the wall or ceiling in front of you. Keep your eyes softly focused on the spot while staying aware of your peripheral vision.
- » In your mind, name five things that you see.
- » Then name five things that you hear.
- » Then name five things that you feel.
- » Then name four things you see, four things you hear, and four things you feel.
- » Then three ...
- » Then two ...
- » Then one ...
- » At this point, you can shut your eyes and let your thoughts drift, or you can go back to five and start over.

Relaxation is the key to a **good night's sleep.**