

## SLEEP PROBLEMS – What Can I Do?

“When I go to bed or wake up at night, I can’t get to sleep. My mind comes alive, starts racing, worrying and thinking about.....

- What unfinished things are there to do?
- What happened today or yesterday?
- What’s going to happen tomorrow or today?

All sorts of stuff comes crowding in to my head and gets louder and louder, and I just feel worse and worse about things.

Sometimes I sing a song to myself in my mind or try to distract myself by thinking about something else to calm myself down, but then that just adds to the problem because I can’t get these things out of my head either.

I try to get to sleep but I can’t. I just lie there watching the clock, tossing and turning and getting more and more awake and fretful.

So in the end I get up and go and make tea and watch a bit of television. When I get fed up with that I go back to bed and eventually drift off but I don’t really sleep very well, my mind is still buzzing, and it’s got all the extra stuff to think about from the television.

In the morning when I finally wake up I feel awful, and instead of getting up and getting on with the day, I turn over and just want to go back to sleep again. Or I have to force myself to get up.

It makes me miserable and when I do get going, people say I look tired and that makes me feel worse. Because of a lack of sleep I find it harder and harder to concentrate, be cheerful and get on with my life.

It’s affecting my work, my relationships and it’s driving me crazy.

What can I do?”

## THE MINDFUL SLEEP PRACTICE

Firstly, let's be clear. The mind that wakes you up and keeps you awake at night..... That's your mind, the same mind that copes with everything you have to deal with in the daytime.

That's the mind that has to carry a lot of stuff around with it to help you organize and manage your life and keep you safe. From time to time you might sleep, but the amazing thing is, your mind never does.

In the daytime, there are always things happening that are not quite solved or resolved, and things that upset and disturb us. Our mind carries them all through the day into the night time and then over into the next day. Sometimes your mind has so much to deal with that it builds up a backlog of unfinished business that makes it almost impossible to sleep.

When you settle to sleep in your bed in relative comfort, quietness and darkness, your mind sees this as an ideal opportunity to really focus and go to work on all your problems. It does not know you need to sleep and as far as it's concerned, solving problems is the main task - much more important - and it will keep you awake as long as necessary to get the job done. Only it's never done.

In order to sleep at night or any time, you need to be calm, at peace with yourself and be able to See and Accept Mindfully all your thoughts, feelings and sensations just as they are, and learn to let them go.

It's the same as the Mindfulness practice you do in the daytime isn't it?

1. Come back to the present moment, notice and allow your breath to circulate freely in and out
2. Centre yourself in awareness of your breath
3. Ground yourself in awareness of your body
4. Be aware of any stress, tension, troubling thoughts, feelings and sensations that may be there for you
5. And on the outbreath let them completely drain away from you

To be able to let go into sleep, there's just a slight 'twist' needed.....

## THE 'TWIST'

In the daytime you need to practice Mindfulness to wake you up to the present moment so you can be fresh to appreciate and get on with whatever you need to. We often refer to this practice of Mindfulness as "Falling Awake".

Of course we don't need any help in falling awake if we're suffering from insomnia, we need to "Fall Asleep", so the 'twist' is to **do all of the above, plus.....**

6. As you lie there, in the present moment Mindfully aware, allow yourself to feel completely calm and peaceful, and then.....
7. Invite sleep to come
8. Calmly center yourself into the breath of sleep
9. Gently ground yourself into the body of sleep
10. Let yourself drift, float and sink into sleep
11. Breathing and sinking ever deeper into sleep

And..... every time your mind goes back to its busy mode (if it does go back), letting go of crossness, frustration or anger with yourself, you calmly repeat the 11 point practice above.

It's very important to do this and get into the habit of doing it whenever you try to sleep, or get back to sleep. If you do anything else like getting up - except to go to the toilet – you will just reinforce the habit of mind that says "We have a problem and we have to do something about this!"

There is no problem – your mind is just doing its job.

Wakefulness is an opportunity to practice being Mindful.

No need to worry because you can't sleep. Your job is to take care of your mind so that it and you can get some peace and rest. You can do this if you practice preparing for sleep by being Mindful.

Used regularly and consistently, The Mindful Sleep Practice will help you reclaim the natural and totally refreshing space you need to inhabit in your body and mind whenever you need to sleep.

Letting go into sleep is as natural as breathing.

Why not learn to be Mindfully Awake in the daytime and Mindfully Asleep at night?

## SleepAWARE

If you find yourself awake and sleep is just not there for you, there is no problem – your mind is just doing its job, and trying to sort everything out for you. Wakefulness is not a problem as long as you see it as an opportunity to practice being Mindful. No need to worry because you can't sleep. Instead, while you're awake, you can help to take care of your mind so that it and you get some peace and rest. You can do this if you practice being Mindful. Then sleep will come gradually and naturally.

No need to distract or occupy yourself by putting lights on or the TV or radio. Just lie there comfortably as you might do for a BodyAWARE practice.

Then as you are fully awake, listening to your breath, allow yourself to come back to the present moment, noticing and allowing your breath to circulate freely in and out.

Centering yourself in awareness of your breath - especially in the tummy area.

Noticing and feeling all the points of contact you're making with the bed, grounding yourself in awareness of your body.

Just focusing on the body and allowing yourself to be aware bit by bit of every part.

Noticing any stress, tension or discomfort in any part of your body, and with gentle curiosity allowing each bit to be just as it is.

Noticing any sensations that are there for you or no sensations at all and noticing how this may change.

Gently expanding your awareness to include thoughts and feelings and any other sensations that may be there for you. Noticing them all and allowing them to be there just as they are.

Then when you're ready, on an out-breath continuing to hold them in awareness, letting them gradually and completely fade and drain away from you. Fully aware of the present moment, Mindfully allowing yourself to feel completely aware, calm and peaceful, as you breathe, and calmly centering yourself into slow breath towards sleep.

Then gradually with a half smile inviting sleep to come naturally. Gently grounding yourself into the soft body of sleep. Letting yourself drift, float and sink into calm sleep.

Breathing and sinking ever deeper into the deep space of sleep.

And..... whenever your mind goes back to its busy chattering mode..... just letting go and surrendering to the soothing presence and embrace of sleep.

SleepAWARE Mindful awareness of the natural process of sleep.