



Simply Mindful
CANBERRA MINDFULNESS CENTRE



Mindfulness for mental health carers

4: Mindfulness to help you sleep

Learning to rest

Sleep is something that ‘happens to us’. It’s not something we can make happen. Practicing ways of dropping into rest and reducing tension, even for a few moments, can help us to learn how to settle down and prepare for sleep.

There are often little opportunities to pause in between tasks – opportunities to slow down and become a little more still and present. Mindfulness is this ‘pause’ - when we tune in to simple things like the breath and through our senses into what we can see, hear and feel.

Most of the time, pausing, becoming grounded and more present is restful, no matter how brief.

Getting to sleep

Taking some time to wind down helps prepare the body to rest. For an hour or two before bed try slowing down and avoiding things which stimulate or cause stress as much as possible:

- avoid screens, caffeine/stimulants and alcohol
- do things that help you wind down and feel more grounded in your body, for example:
 - warm bath or shower
 - soothing calming music
 - light reading
 - mindfulness meditation
- exercise at any time of the day helps us to sleep better at night. With high intensity exercise you’ll need an hour or two afterwards for your heart rate to settle before sleeping.

Getting back to sleep

Dropping the struggle to sleep makes it easier to get to sleep. Stress can become a habit especially when we’ve been through a very difficult time. If you are highly agitated or distressed, try getting out of bed and using the session 1 practices to interrupt and de-scalate stress.

If all else fails, remember mindfulness meditation is a form of deep rest. You might like to try:

- safe calm place practice (over the page)
- body scan practice
- breath practice
- sound meditation (rain on a roof, distant rhythmic drum beats, calm voice)

Safe calm place practice

Bring to mind a safe calm place. It can be real or imaginary, or a combination, it can be inside or outside. As vividly as possible bring to mind what you can see, hear, feel, touch, taste, smell. You can invite others to join you anytime and spend time just on your own anytime. You can come back here anytime— it's yours.

Take a mental picture, like a postcard of your safe calm place and give it a name.

TIP Do one of these exercises every day for the next week.

WHY? Whatever we practice we get good at! Practicing regularly now will mean you're more likely to remember it when you need it!

5 quick ways to drop into rest in your day

1. Find your feet. Take your full attention to your feet and feel the sensations in your feet.
2. One minute body scan. Try alternating left and right sides of the body
3. Walking practice. As you walk from one room to another, or the car to the door tune into your feet. Get out of your head and tune into the sensations of walking in the feet and legs
4. One minute of breath. Focus on the letting go of the long slow out breath
5. Listen to soothing or pleasant sounds – birds, rain, wind in the trees, calming music, a cat purring

Body Scan Practice

Find a quiet safe place ideally where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes. Sit or lie comfortably. As best you can let go of any tension or holding in the body.

Starting at the feet, tune into sensations in the body and slowly let your attention travel up through the body. Simply noticing sensations as you go. You might notice warmth or coolness, pressure, contact with clothing, a sense of lightness or heaviness, tingling, pulsing...seeing if you can bring a kind gentle curiosity to sensations as they arise.

TIPS

If intense or distressing sensations or emotions arise you can still tune into them with gentle curiosity.

- Try breathing into them, letting the breath soothe and support, move in and through the sensations.
- Try taking your attention to a part of the body that feels ok, rest there for a while and when you feel ready check in again with the place of intensity. Move your attention back and forth as often as you need. This helps you learn that you can manage your exposure to the discomfort.