HD COUNSELING

# Sleep Hygiene Essentials

*Simple practices to support deeper, more restorative sleep*

Hilary Dwyer, LPCA · HD Counseling Services

*Tailored therapy for high-achieving women navigating anxiety, overthinking, and leadership pressure.*

YOUR ENVIRONMENT

## Set the Stage for Sleep

| | |
|---|---|
| Dim the Lights | Lower lighting 1–2 hours before bed. Bright light suppresses melatonin and signals your brain to stay awake. |
| Cool the Room | A slightly cool room supports your body's natural temperature drop at sleep onset. Warm your extremities with socks if needed. |
| Keep Nights Dim | Keep lights dim from evening through the night. Bright light at night suppresses melatonin and can shift your body clock. |

WIND-DOWN TECHNIQUES

## Calm the Body and Mind

| | |
|---|---|
| Paradoxical Intention *(Helpful for racing thoughts)* | Instead of trying to fall asleep, try to stay awake with eyes closed. This removes performance pressure and often invites sleep naturally. |
| 3-3-3 Sensory Scan | Name 3 things you see, 3 you hear, 3 you feel in your body. Then repeat with eyes closed using imagination. Invites deep relaxation. |
| Non-Sleep Deep Rest | Yoga Nidra, meditation, or slow breathing (10–15 min) can help you rest and recover even when sleep is elusive. |

LIFESTYLE FACTORS

## What You Do During the Day Matters

| | |
|---|---|
| Limit Caffeine | Caffeine can reduce deep sleep by 15 to 30%, even hours later, often without you noticing. If sleep is poor, try cutting off by noon. |
| Time Your Light | Morning sunlight (within an hour of waking) sets your body clock. Evening light disrupts it. This single habit affects sleep, energy, and mood. |
| Alcohol Awareness | Alcohol may help you fall asleep but fragments sleep quality, suppresses REM, and increases nighttime waking, often without you remembering it. |

BEDSIDE PRACTICES

## Simple Habits That Make a Difference

| | |
|---|---|
| Keep a Notebook Nearby | Write down worrying thoughts before bed, or do a brain dump if you wake in the night. Getting thoughts onto paper signals to your brain that they are held. |
| Gratitude Journaling | Write two or three things you are grateful for before turning out the light. This gently shifts your nervous system toward calm. |
| Keep the Bed for Sleep *(Stimulus control)* | If you are awake in bed more than 20 minutes, get up and do something calm and boring in another room. Return only when sleepy. |