



Amy Olshever

COUNSELING & PSYCHOTHERAPY | PHD, LCSW

SLEEP WELL and SLEEP BETTER

SCHEDULE

Stick to a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake up time, even on the weekends. This helps to regulate your body's clock and could help you fall asleep and stay asleep for the night.

RITUAL

Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual. A relaxing, routine activity right before bedtime conducted away from bright lights helps separate your sleep time from activities that can cause excitement, stress or anxiety which can make it more difficult to fall asleep, get sound and deep sleep or remain asleep.

AVOID NAPS

If you have trouble sleeping, avoid naps, especially in the afternoon. Power napping may help you get through the day, but if you find that you can't fall asleep at bedtime, eliminating even short catnaps may help.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Exercise daily. Vigorous exercise is best, but even light exercise is better than no activity. Exercise at any time of day, but not at the expense of your sleep.

YOUR BEDROOM

Evaluate your room. Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep. Your bedroom should be cool – between 60 and 67 degrees. Your bedroom should also be free from any noise that can disturb your sleep. Finally, your bedroom should be free from any light. Check your room for noises or other distractions. This includes a bed partner's sleep disruptions such as snoring.

Consider using blackout curtains, eye-shades, ear plugs, "white noise" machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices.

Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows. Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive. The one you have been using for years may have exceeded its life expectancy – about 9 or 10 years for most good quality mattresses. Have comfortable pillows and make the room attractive and inviting



Amy Olshever

COUNSELING & PSYCHOTHERAPY | PHD, LCSW

for sleep but also free of allergens that might affect you and objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night.

BRIGHT LIGHT

Use bright light to help manage your circadian rhythms. Avoid bright light in the evening and expose yourself to sunlight in the morning. This will keep your circadian rhythms in check.

AVOID BEFORE BEDTIME

- Alcohol
- Cigarettes
- Heavy meals in the evening

Alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine can disrupt sleep. Eating big or spicy meals can cause discomfort from indigestion that can make it hard to sleep. If you can, avoid eating large meals for two to three hours before bedtime. Try a light snack 45 minutes before bed if you're still hungry.

WIND DOWN

Your body needs time to shift into sleep mode, so spend the last hour before bed doing a calming activity such as reading. For some people, using an electronic device such as a laptop can make it hard to fall asleep, because the particular type of light emanating from the screens of these devices is activating to the brain. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid electronics before bed or in the middle of the night.

If you can't sleep, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired. It is best to take work materials, computers and televisions out of the sleeping environment. Use your bed only for sleep and sex to strengthen the association between bed and sleep. If you associate a particular activity or item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine.

SUPPLEMENTS

****Always check with your MD before starting any new supplement****

- Magnesium and calcium
- Wild lettuce
- Hops
- Melatonin



Amy Olshever

COUNSELING & PSYCHOTHERAPY | PHD, LCSW

- L-theanine
- Valerian

AROMATHERAPY

You can use lavender oil or spray on your bedding. Johnson and Johnson makes lavender baby wash which is nice to put in your bath before bed. Lemon, bergamot, sage and jasmine may also be helpful. Smell them before bedtime to be sure you like the fragrance.

YOGA and MEDITATION

Breathing and Meditation Exercises

If you use your phone to use meditation apps put your phone on airplane mode

“Practicing regular, mindful breathing can be calming and energizing and can even help with stress-related health problems ranging from panic attacks to digestive disorders.”
-Andrew Weil, M.D.

Since breathing is something we can control and regulate, it is a useful tool for achieving a relaxed and clear state of mind. These are three breathing exercises that help relax and reduce stress: The Stimulating Breath, The 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise (also called the Relaxing Breath), and Breath Counting. Try each of these breathing techniques and see how they affect your stress and anxiety levels.

The 4-7-8 (or Relaxing Breath) Exercise

This breathing exercise is utterly simple, takes almost no time, requires no equipment and can be done anywhere. Although you can do the exercise in any position, try to sit with your back straight while learning the exercise. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there through the entire exercise. You will be exhaling through your mouth around your tongue; try pursing your lips slightly if this seems awkward.

Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.

Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four. Hold your breath for a count of seven.

Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.



Amy Olshever

COUNSELING & PSYCHOTHERAPY | PHD, LCSW

This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

Note that with this breathing technique, you always inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth. The tip of your tongue stays in position the whole time. Exhalation takes twice as long as inhalation. The absolute time you spend on each phase is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio of 4:7:8 for the three phases. With practice you can slow it all down and get used to inhaling and exhaling more and more deeply.

This breathing exercise is a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system. Unlike tranquilizing drugs, which are often effective when you first take them but then lose their power over time, this exercise is subtle when you first try it, but gains in power with repetition and practice. Do it at least twice a day. You cannot do it too frequently. Do not do more than four breaths at one time for the first month of practice. Later, if you wish, you can extend it to eight breaths. If you feel a little lightheaded when you first breathe this way, do not be concerned; it will pass.

Once you develop this technique by practicing it every day, it will be a very useful tool that you will always have with you. Use it whenever anything upsetting happens – before you react. Use it whenever you are aware of internal tension or stress.

This technique is a powerful method of falling asleep because it delivers more oxygen than normal breathing to the parasympathetic nervous system, which becomes over-stimulated during times of stress. Regular counting also helps to distract the mind from the issues of the day that it can carry to bed.

Breath Counting

Sit in a comfortable position with the spine straight and head inclined slightly forward. Gently close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Then let the breath come naturally without trying to influence it. Ideally it will be quiet and slow, but depth and rhythm may vary.

To begin the exercise, count “one” to yourself as you exhale.

The next time you exhale, count “two,” and so on up to “five.”

Then begin a new cycle, counting “one” on the next exhalation.



Amy Olshever

COUNSELING & PSYCHOTHERAPY | PHD, LCSW

Never count higher than “five,” and count only when you exhale. You will know your attention has wandered when you find yourself up to “eight,” “12,” even “19.”

No worries, no judgment, just start again from 1.

Try to do 2-3 minutes of this at first and work your way up to 10 minutes at a time.

You can do this exercise as many times during the day as you want or need to.