

### Sleep ("The 4 Pillar Plan" book by Dr Rangan Chatterjee)

#### 1. Create an environment of absolute darkness

- Try to keep your bedroom completely dark
- Fit correctly sized extra-thick curtains or blackout blinds
- Remove ALL screens from your bedroom
- Don't use your phone as an alarm (get an old-fashioned alarm clock)
- Leave your charges in another room to avoid bringing your phone into the bedroom

#### 2. Embrace Morning Light

- Spend at least twenty minutes outside every morning
- Have your morning tea or coffee in the garden or next to a window
- If you must drive in the morning, leave the car a ten-minute walk away from your destination
- If you shop in the morning, park as far as possible from the supermarket entrance
- Get off the bus one stop before your destination and walk the remaining distance
- Try to take a morning break and go for a short walk outside

#### 3. Create A Bedtime Routine

- Start your evening wind-down with a "No-Tech 90" as part of a set ritual
- Set up an alarm to signal that the wind-down must begin and set it for ninety minutes before lights out (if 90 minutes is too much start with 30 minutes)
- As soon as the alarm sounds turn all of your e-devices
- Take a relaxing shower/bath, listen to relaxing music, read next to a dim light
- Consider opening the bedroom window (the perfect temperature for sleeping is around 17°C/65°F)
- Try setting your heating to switch off around an hour before bed (this way, when you get into bed, your room will be at the optimal temperature for sleep)
- Eat earlier in the day, before 7 p.m. if possible
- Exercise earlier in the day (avoid vigorous activity in the three hours before bed)
- Socialise earlier in the day

#### 4. Manage your commotion

- Minimize any activity that will raise emotional tension before bed
- Avoid doing anything that's going to set your mind working before bed (avoid discussing emotive subjects in the evenings, starting a new work task, discussing financial or stressful family matters)
- Don't watch the news, a thriller, or any similar commotion-causing program before bed
- Make it a rule not to check work emails in the ninety minutes before bed
- Focus on relaxing exercise in the evening such as yoga or light stretching
- Try the 3-4-5 breathing method to help you unwind from the day's stresses
- Meditation before bed can help you quieten your mind
- Educate your family and friends about your evening routine
- Make an entry in your gratitude journal before bed

#### 5. Enjoy your caffeine before noon

- Ensure that any caffeine you do choose to consume is taken before lunchtime
- Caffeine's half-life is about six hours, although there's a bit of individual variability depending on your genetics and various lifestyle factors
- Drink non-caffeinated herbal tea to get you past your 3 p.m. slump (remember, green tea contains caffeine)
- Avoid decaffeinated coffee as many brands still contain trace amounts
- Drink sparkling water in place of your caffeinated beverage
- Reduce your sugar intake (this will give you more energy and reduce the likelihood of craving a caffeine pick-me-up in the afternoon)
- Drink camomile tea in the evening (this can be a great caffeine replacement as well as promote relaxation before sleep)

### AM/PM Routine

Having a way to start and end the day, that is positive and rooted in self-care, can be hugely beneficial. This will vary from person to person.

### Lavender Essential Oil

Calming and relaxing, soothing and supportive. It reduces anxiety and aids restful sleep. Get a good quality oil.

- A lavender oil diffuser placed near your bed could help you wind down, relax, and prepare your body and mind for sleep each night
- A few drops on your pillowcase could also help promote a restful night (be sure to apply to the underside of your pillow, as lavender oil can cause sensitivity to the skin and eyes if applied directly)
- Homemade room mist. Just mix 2-3 drops in 200mls of water in a glass spray bottle. Make sure to shake thoroughly before every use.
- Homemade lavender massage oil can be created by adding a few drops of lavender to a carrier oil such as jojoba, sweet almond, or coconut oil. You can massage your feet before bedtime for example.
- Further, a few drops of lavender on a cotton handkerchief can provide a moment of relaxation when you're on the go.

### Meditation App "Insight Timer"

The Insight timer app intends to make meditation and yoga convenient, easy, and pleasant. Combined, meditation and yoga improve mental and physical health and well-being by calming racing thoughts, reducing stress, and reducing anxiety.

To receive the full benefits of meditation, it must be practised daily.

<https://insighttimer.com/en-gb>

### Yoga with Adriene

Adriene is a very popular online yoga teacher. Some of her FREE online yoga is quite challenging but there is something here for everyone.

It can all be done in the comfort of your own home, anytime and she has a huge back catalogue of yoga for all sorts of emotional and physical needs.

- Web <https://yogawithadriene.com/>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@yogawithadriene>
- Yoga For Beginners – The Basics <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWobp3phsEU>
- Guided Meditations <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLui6Eyny-UzzG5qB0LNxyVh3Mu6GjYJC>

### Yoga Nidra

You can do it in bed, or on the floor, get a blanket, and get comfy...examples:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9r8jXUvsi3w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tih9OB7lxF4>

Just choose one with a voice you can relax to and a length that you can fit in.

### 3-4-5 Breathing

1. Breathe in for three seconds
2. Hold for four seconds
3. Breathe out for five

### Examples of phone-free me time you might want to consider

- Having a bath (you may want to add Epsom salts to your bath, full of magnesium)
- Going for a walk (preferably in nature)
- Sitting in a café having a drink
- Sitting in a park relaxing
- Reading a magazine
- Reading a book
- Singing
- Playing music
- Gardening
- Cooking with your favourite album playing, or in silence
- Painting
- Colouring-in
- Dancing
- Fifteen minutes of yoga
- Self-massage (lavender massage oil, magnesium massage oil)

### Strategies when craving a sweet treat

- Drink two large glasses of water (sparkling water might be helpful)
- Do some deep breathing (such as 3-4-5 breathing)
- Have a piece of fruit
- Eat a handful of nuts
- Have a small portion of 80/90% dark chocolate (ideally 100%)
- Be prepared, and keep healthy snacks readily available (carrot and hummus, celery and nut butter, a piece of fruit, boiled eggs, seeds, nuts, or some olives)

### Make sure you get enough magnesium

- Magnesium is an essential mineral that may help to promote relaxation and stress reduction to improve sleep.
- Incorporating magnesium-rich foods into your diet helps meet your body's magnesium needs, supports overall health, and may improve your sleep.
- Try eating foods to keep your levels up:
  1. Leafy greens: Dark, leafy green vegetables such as kale, spinach, and Swiss chard
  2. Nuts and seeds: Almonds, cashews, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds
  3. Whole grains: Brown rice, quinoa, and oats
  4. Legumes: Beans, lentils, and chickpeas
  5. Fruits: Avocados, bananas, and dried apricots
  6. Dark chocolate