

# HOW TO REGAIN A NORMAL SLEEP PATTERN

by Surja Tjahaja

## The Do's:

1. Do an hour of daytime cardiovascular activity (e.g., jogging, fast walking, swimming, bicycling, etc.) at least every other day. Work up to doing cardiovascular activities on a daily basis.
2. Establish routine times for going to bed and waking up.
3. Eat light dinners of easily digestible food.
4. Avoid eating close to bedtime. It's best to eat four hours before going to bed.
5. Before going to sleep, lower the temperature of your bedroom. Keep it dark and noise-free
6. Before sleeping, read in bed for half an hour or more. (Not on electronic devices!)
7. Focus the mind on how tired and sleepy it feels.
8. If you have sleep apnea (repeated stops and starts of breathing), please consult a doctor.
9. If awakened at night (e.g. by a need to urinate), first try to focus the mind on how tired and sleepy it feels. If this does not work, sit up and read a boring book while focusing the mind on:
  - how sleepy and tired it feels, and
  - that sleeping is more desirable than reading the boring book.
10. Tell the mind that now is the time to sleep; all worries or concerns can be picked up the next morning. (Rest assured: they will not grow stale or go away.)
11. Meditate frequently to strengthen concentration and relaxation skills.
12. Maintain a positive attitude and think that you will be able to regain a normal sleeping pattern.
13. Have confidence that when the body and mind are tired enough, you will sleep.
14. Find ways to relax close to bedtime (e.g., take a hot bath and think of pleasant things such as gratitude and love).
15. Maintain your peace throughout the day by thinking positively.
16. Believe that you will be able to sleep well tonight.
17. Visualize a time when you felt exhausted (maybe after a long flight). Then imagine you feel that sense of tiredness now and how nice it would be to just fall asleep.
18. Practice the "body scan" meditation and relax each part of your body.
19. Use breath cycles of deep inhale and double exhale to relax deeply.
20. Get a body massage before going to bed.

## The Don'ts:

1. Don't drink more than one glass of alcohol during dinner because alcohol disrupts sleep patterns. If you do drink alcohol, try drinking glasses of water in equal amounts (or more).
2. Don't drink alcohol, energy drinks and/or coffee less than six hours before bedtime.
3. Don't smoke anything less than six hours before bedtime.
4. Don't take a nap in the afternoon.

5. Don't exercise late in the evening.
6. Don't see a movie, read or discuss a disturbing story before bedtime.
7. Don't get involved with any activity that is stimulating or get into an argument close to bedtime.
8. Avoid associating with people and being in environments that cause stress.
9. Don't rely on prescriptive sleeping medications, melatonin, or marijuana for more than two days. (Consult with your doctor about the effects of the drugs on your system.)
10. Don't get upset if you cannot get a good night's sleep every day.
11. Don't think that you won't be able to sleep properly just because you cannot recently do so. (Good sleeping patterns can be regained.)
12. Don't let daily events upset easily you.
13. Don't overthink or stress out about trying to go to sleep. (Sleep is a natural process that your body uses to rest and repair itself.)
14. Don't maintain a negative attitude by believing that you will have difficulty sleeping.
15. Don't fear or dread entering your bed before going to sleep.
16. Don't get in and stay in bed *unless* you are going to sleep. Dedicate your bed for sleeping, not working.

