



Sleep Well,
Live Well



Chapter 5, Lesson 2: Combating Stress Before Bed

Establishing a routine that promotes rest and relaxation before bed can help you to reduce stress.

Finding a routine that works for you is important. What works for you may not be helpful for others. It may take a few tries before you find something that really helps you sleep. In this lesson, you'll learn about things you should avoid before bed and ideas for what you may want to try to help you relax.

Create a bedtime routine

By doing the same activities each night before bed, you can help train your body to wind down in preparation for sleep. It can also help you de-stress, especially if you choose relaxing activities. Determine how much time you can devote before bed as “me” time.

Ideas for Relaxation Before Bed

Try some of these ideas to keep stress out of your bedroom!

Journal

Writing down your thoughts and feelings can help you manage stress and anxiety. It provides you with the opportunity to think through your problems clearly, find solutions, and get them out of your head before bed.

Read

If your reading during the week consists of mostly emails, you may want to free up some time to read for pleasure.

Take a warm bath or shower

Warm water can help relieve tension and promote relaxation. If you find yourself preoccupied with worries from the day, you can even use it as an opportunity to meditate. While washing yourself, picture your troubles washing away, too.

Meditate

Taking time to meditate can be a great way to relax and release your stress before bed. Research indicates that habitual meditation can even improve the way you cope with stress! You'll learn more about meditation in Lesson 3.

Find a hobby you take pleasure in

There are many options out there, but if you're looking for ideas to start, consider painting, drawing, knitting, songwriting or playing an instrument.

Cuddle with your significant other, kids or furry friend

Whether it's people or pets, physical interaction with those you love produces brain-pleasing neurotransmitters that promote relaxation and a sense of calmness.

Practice deep breathing

Proper breathing or “belly breathing” can be beneficial when you are trying to relax. Most people breathe from their chest, resulting in insufficient oxygen intake, which can cause more stress! Breathe deep into your diaphragm in order to belly breathe. You should feel your abdomen expand as you inhale and contract as you exhale.

Make time to talk and laugh

Spending time with friends or family can help you to feel happier and less stressed.

Find your own relaxing activity

Everyone has different preferences and perceptions of what is helpful to relax. If the ideas above are not helpful, think about what activities you can do to relax.



What to avoid before bed...

To help you get a good night's sleep and reduce your stress, avoid these things before bed:

TV, computer, tablets, cellphones

Whatever you are watching or using them for can stimulate your brain and may cause Stress—for example, if you get a text about an obligation you have the next day.

The news or other stressful and stimulating programs

If you do choose to watch TV, be sure to pick shows that are enjoyable and relaxing. The news, TV dramas and intellectual thrillers can elicit the stress response, making it difficult to wind down for bed.

Checking your email

Especially your work email. Stay on top of your mail earlier in the day to avoid becoming preoccupied, agitated or nervous by what you may read at night.

Chores

Avoid things like paying bills, cleaning, laundry, sorting mail, etc. Complete all your tasks earlier in the day or aim to stop at least one hour before bed.

Watching the time

While being aware of the general time is important, being too preoccupied with it can increase your stress.

Caffeine

While you might depend on caffeine to get you through busy and hectic days, consuming it too late in the day may make it difficult to fall asleep, which will only make the next day more stressful!

Expose yourself to bright lights

Once you're getting close to your bedtime, turn off or dim some of the lights in your house to help promote sleep.



Next Steps

★ **Read Lesson 3:**
Getting Started with
Mindfulness Meditation

★ **Take Chapter 5 Quiz**