

How to establish a healthy evening routine so that your mind is better able to wind down and drift off into sleep

Berenice Boxler

Monday

assess your current habits

Assess your current habits around your evening activities (food, media consumption, movement, body care, time you go to bed, etc.).

Write down why you want to change something and how you imagine this change to have an impact on your overall wellbeing.

Tuesday

start paying attention

Pay attention to your body, your thinking patterns and your emotional state in the evenings.

- How do you feel physically at the end of a day – today and in your memory of the past days?
- How do you feel emotionally at the end of a day – today and in your memory of the past days?
- Do you generally feel like your work is finished for the day or is there often no clear cut?
- How do you feel around your evening tasks and the involved beings (partner, kids, animals, etc.), when the evening comes nearer?

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Now evaluate your findings:

Is there are lot of fatigue and exhaustion, both physically and emotionally? If yes, then this is probably one of the reasons why your mind and body have difficulties finding proper rest in the night.

Wednesday

dream big

- If you had no compromises to make and no duties, what would you like to do in the evening?
- What would give you pleasure – and why?

The answers to these questions offer insight into your personal needs, for ex. connection, being heard, solitude, contemplation, movement, calm, etc. Don't judge, just dream.

- What (or who) keeps you from doing what you want? – Try not to blame anyone but see the situation as neutral as possible.

Now think about your mornings:

- How would you like to feel in the morning?
- How would you like your day to begin, if there were no one to disturb you?
- What do you think you would need to do in the evening to allow your perfect morning to become reality? – There is no wrong answer, just write down what would seem right for you.

Thursday

take action

Start implementing little changes in the evening (that do not involve other people) to try out every day before you go to bed. Pick 1 or max. 2 for a start and then gradually add whatever speaks to you.

examples: writing down 3 things you are grateful for; reflecting on the day and how it made you feel; clearly remembering 5 good things that happened today (re-live the situation or write it down); stretching the hips, legs and neck for 5 minutes (if you don't know how to do this, get an app or switch on a youtube-video) or do some light yoga to wind down the body; washing your face and hands mindfully (smell the soap, feel the water, etc.); having a mindful cup of herbal tea; reading; etc.

Friday

reflect and let go

Think about your food and media consumption in the second half of the day.

Consider the following:

- Limit caffeine and sugar consumption (or let go completely) after 2 pm.
- Drink enough water regularly during the day, but not right before going to bed.
- Have a light dinner and no later than 2 hours before bedtime.
- Drink no alcohol in the evening.
- Avoid electrical devices just before going to bed. Don't use a device (no mails, no news app, no messages etc.) in the bedroom. If you need to use your phone as an alarm clock, turn it to flight mode as you enter the bedroom.
- Avoid too much television watching just before bedtime, especially exciting or frightening content (horror film, thriller, special report on catastrophes, etc.). Rather go for novel reading or listening to bedtime stories (for ex. on the app *Calm*).

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Saturday

take it further

Start implementing little changes in the evening while already lying in bed. Pick 1 or max. 2 for a start and then gradually add whatever speaks to you.

examples: thinking about the people you had contact with today which made you feel valued, grateful, or connected; scanning the body and intentionally releasing tensions; trying a progressive muscle relaxation (easy to learn: check out youtube or your meditation app); embracing the dark by opening the eyes when the lights are out and simply observing the darkness for a couple of minutes, only being and breathing; calming down the nervous system by breathing in on the count of 4 and breathing out on the count of 8, repeating several times; thanking your body for all the movements and activities of the day; feeling the breath in the belly; etc.

Note: Sleep experts strongly suggest to only use the bed for sleeping and sexual intercourse. Then the body will (re)develop a connection of bed = sleep. This means that one should consider to stop reading or writing in bed, and certainly avoid TV, tablets or smartphone use. However, consciously relaxing the body and the mind work perfectly fine to prepare you for sleep.

Sunday

support your body

How you treat your body will have an impact on your sleep quality. Here are some tips about how to support your body's wellbeing and help your mind wind down in the evening.

- Exercise regularly, but find something that works for you and your body and that keeps you motivated to do. Avoid high intensity training too close to bedtime.
- Go out in nature regularly, breathe the air, smell the flowers, try out „forest bathing“, go for walks and explore new areas, watch the birds and ants, etc.
- Give your body breaks from the unhealthy habit of sitting too much. Get up, stretch, drink a glass of water or walk some stairs every 30 minutes. You can use apps such as *Focus Keeper* to get a reminder.

Tip: Place your phone somewhere further away so that you need to get up when you want to check it or when you get a message.

- Allow your mind to focus on the task ahead and not be distracted too much. This will help your mind not to be too scattered and dispersed, which can become a pattern and keep you from winding down in the evening.

Tip: Switch off notifications on your phone altogether or simply put your phone in flight mode when you want to work on something without interruption.

Grant your mind and body time, patience and trust to gradually shift
for a greater wellbeing and better sleep.