

Sleep

Whether you experience chronic stress in your daily life or are going through some circumstantial stress, it is likely the stress response is in overdrive. This can cause what we call overactivity of the hypothalamic pituitary response. Most insomnia and sleep disorders are caused by overactivity of this response. The biggest contributors to overactivity: chronic stress, anxiety and depression. To make matters worse, the worse your sleep is, the more overactivity of this response. When dealing with any sleep disorder, we need to reduce our stress hormones before bed and ensure we are taking steps to reduce overactivity of the stress response.

- My recommendations have a wide breadth. I generally start with lifestyle habits/choices, which you'll see listed here. Then, if indicated, get lab results and discuss indicated supplements and/or herbal remedies.
- Gentle exercises and/or stretches before bed
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9LVKL2pGmo> I like the combo of moves with music; but everyone has their preferences!
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLDHeV9OI5U> At times I prefer no music; I also like that this ends with silence.
- Studies show getting out of bed and doing a low-stimulation activity (reading, crochet, word searches, free-writing/journaling thoughts) and then returning to bed once you are sleepy again helps increase sleep habits.
- Consider looking into Calm, Headspace, or Insight Timer apps for guided meditations, bedtime stories, soundtracks, etc. to help relax into sleep.
- The key to protecting your circadian rhythm and keeping your body's internal clock regulated is routine. Set a wake time and a bedtime and stick to this consistently. One way to help your circadian rhythm is to get out at first light and expose your eyes (no glasses, contacts, DO NOT LOOK DIRECTLY INTO THE SUN) for 10 minutes. If possible, go out into the Earth barefoot to also get grounding benefits.
- Keep your room dark to enhance melatonin's natural release. No TV or bright screens, turn off lights in other rooms, remove night lights, use black out curtains if necessary.
- Use salt lamps at night. Red light can reduce stress and improve melatonin production both of which will have a positive impact on your sleep quality. Salt lamps are an excellent way to add in more red light. Try using one as an alternative to your reading light.

- Eliminate blue light exposure by avoiding screens 2 hours before bedtime. Blue light is a type of high-energy visible light emitted by electronic devices such as smartphones, computers, and some lights. Unfortunately, it has been shown to reduce melatonin production. The most effective way to If that is unavoidable the following options can help:
 - F.lux blue light blocker app. This app is available on your computer. It works to automatically adjust the color and brightness of your screen depending on your location and time zone.
 - Blue light blocking lenses/glasses.
- Your body naturally drops its temperature in the evening to signal you to feel sleepy. When you are asleep, we need our bodies to stay cool to stay asleep. During the REM cycle of sleep our temperature modulation switch is turned OFF, meaning if you are warm you will wake from REM sleep in order to cool down the body. Keeping your room at a low temperature – between 60 and 65 degrees – may improve the quality of your sleep.
- Consider taking baths with magnesium sulfate salts (aka Epsom salts) only a 20 minute soak can help relax muscles and the mind. Bathing before bed seems counterintuitive to the aforementioned point, however, warm baths lower your core body temperature.
- White noise machines can be helpful for light sleepers
- When we are very busy throughout the day or have tendencies to control our emotions to not disturb others, sometimes our intuition and/or spiritual guidance don't get a chance to share their voice (if you will). Strong emotions can be signs of this. During the day, try implementing 15-30 minutes of “me time” to process some of the emotions. I like journaling/free-writing, diaphragmatic breathwork, praying or meditating, or even Progressive Muscle Release (PMR).
 - Here's a great article for PMR
<https://www.verywellmind.com/reduce-tension-with-progressive-muscle-relaxation-314460>
 - Video for PMR https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1h-zizAGsc