

Ten steps to peaceful sleep
By Kay Wagner LMP
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It's three A.M. and you're tossing, turning and watching the clock. The more you watch the clock the more anxious you become. Worries and stresses are playing like a bad movie in your mind. Sound familiar?

Wakeful nights are a problem for many of us. Mukiltean Rick Allison is a 40-something instructions manager who travels regularly and has found his own solution for sleeplessness. "I've learned to recognize my triggers. Exercise during the day, read at bedtime and then listen with the headphones to soothing music for 15-20 minutes. You have to do something that quiets you down. Get into a routine," Allison explains. "If I don't get 20-30 minutes of exercise, I'll have trouble sleeping all night. Reading and listening to quiet music gives me time to wind down. It's a trigger to get my body to relax. When I do my routine I get into the right frame of mind so I can let go and sleep well. It really works."

Here is a great plan from a busy single father and small business owner. At bedtime, make a list of two things you'd like to do tomorrow. Then add the things you have to do tomorrow. Leave your list on the kitchen counter. When you go to bed you can clear your mind of the 'have to' list and focus on your 'want to' list. As you are falling asleep you can set your mind free and take your pleasant goals into your dreams. Then when you start your coffee in the morning you can think about tackling your 'have to' list.

Mukilteo Acupuncturist Marianne Tynan suggests gently massaging the 'yintang' point located midway between the eyebrows. "It is important for calming the spirit. It helps an over thinking, restless mind," Tynan says. "Massaging the 'spirit gate' acupressure point also calms the spirit. It's located on the inside of the wrist where the deepest crease is when the hand is flexed and straight down from the pinky finger."

Traditional Chinese medical theory also suggests gentle ear massage for its beneficial affect on the whole body. Maintain deep abdominal breathing while stimulating these powerful relaxation points.

Deep breathing clears the mind and detoxifies the body while it helps lull you back to sleep. Here are two excellent techniques:

The counting breath: Inhale to a slow count of six. Hold for four counts. Exhale to a count of eight. This is the best breathing technique I know for insomnia.

The deep peace breath: Focus on making your breath slower, deeper, quieter and more regular.

Repeating a short, positive phrase to yourself calms and quiets the mind. Try one of these to help you sleep. "I am calm and quiet" "I am safe. I am warm." or "I am at peace."

Melatonin is a natural supplement that is helpful for many. Take it 30 minutes before bedtime.

Wakeful nights can be a signal that you're not taking enough time for fun or creative expression during the day. Try adding something fun to your daily calendar.

If you still can't sleep try remembering fun times. Go into sensory detail, bringing to mind the colors, sights, sounds, smells, interactions with others, air temperature, etc. to carry you back to that positive time and place.

Listening to guided relaxation CD's is a popular way to drift off. Relaxation CD's guide the deep breathing and keep the mind focused. The serene sounds can help transport you into the limitless horizons of sleep. Sweet dreams.

Stressed? Headaches? Insomnia?

Kay Wagner LMP has a special talent for helping people relax and improve their health. Kay offers “R &R” private sessions, coaching breathing, stretching and relaxation. She is a Licensed Massage Therapist and Certified Yoga and Pilates instructor. Learn to relax and rejuvenate in Kay’s studio overlooking the mountains and water at 828 2nd St. Mukilteo WA 98275.

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