

Quarter 3 - 2021

NEWSLETTER

Get Better Sleep: Put Your Racing Mind to Bed

REFERENCES: <https://www.everydayhealth.com/sleep> & <https://www.verywellhealth.com>

Can't put that racing mind to bed? Whether it's stopping you from quickly falling asleep or staying asleep, there's no question an unsettled mind can be a major obstacle to slumber. Insomnia can occur in anyone, given the right circumstances. Particularly during periods of stress or anxiety, difficulty falling or staying asleep may manifest.

In order to turn off a racing mind, you have to deny it the fuel it needs to start spinning in the dark. This can be accomplished by managing stress, spending some time unwinding before bed and using distraction and relaxation techniques. It can be very helpful to set aside some time during the day to address your stressors. This is sometimes called "scheduled worry time."

Every day, take some time to identify, list, and work to resolve what causes you stress, anxiety, tension, or worry. This may be done by spending some time each afternoon creating or reviewing a list of the things that contribute to stress in your life. Write them down. Then, in a second column, provide a few action items that will allow the stress to be addressed and relieved.

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How to Use 'Scheduled Worry Time'

If you have a major project due at work in two weeks, this may cause you to have increased stress. It may seem insurmountable. There is no way you can get it all done. You don't even know where to begin. This stress can be incapacitating. Rather than being overwhelmed, break it down into manageable chunks—and then get to work. Make these items components of the action plan: review the files, speak with your coworker, schedule a meeting, draft the proposal, and finalize the presentation. As you accomplish the tasks day by day, you cross them off. Eventually, the stressor itself can be removed from the list.

There may be some items on the list that have no obvious resolution. This may cause additional anxiety and zap your energy throughout the day. Tell yourself that you have to let it go. Come back to it tomorrow. Perhaps things will change and by then you will have a plan that will help you to move forward. In the meantime, focus your efforts on the things that you can change.

By writing down your stressors, you put a name to the sources of stress for you. It also helps you release them from your mind. You don't need to think about them or to constantly remind yourself so you don't forget. By creating an action plan, you find ways that stress can be relieved. As you tackle the tasks, review them daily and enjoy a sense of accomplishment in overcoming the issue.

If thoughts related to the stress present themselves at night, you respond by simply telling yourself, "I don't need to think about this right now. I will think about it tomorrow during my scheduled worry time. I can address it then." This can shut down the stream of thoughts and allow you to get to (or back to) sleep.

Steps To Get Sleep When Your Mind is Racing

Don't Stay in Bed

This can be a very frustrating problem that seems to become worse the more you think about it. It's imperative that you break this vicious cycle of poor sleep and worrying about not sleeping. For this reason, we recommend avoiding lying awake in bed. If you haven't nodded off within 20 minutes of putting your head on the pillow, get up. Go back to your relaxing activity – journaling, reading, meditation, listening to music, etc. Then, when you begin to feel sleepy, try to go back to bed.

Calm Your Mind

Though these methods may feel silly at first, guided imagery, medication, and mindfulness are all beneficial for a racing mind. More specifically, you can focus on slowing your breath and using progressive muscle relaxation to take your mind off stressors.

Keep it Positive

To break the cycle of racing thoughts and worrying about lack of sleep, highlight the positive aspects of your life. Keeping a gratitude journal can help disrupt the negative mindset. Making this type of journaling a habit, gives you the opportunity to emphasize the good relationships and features that you are thankful for in your life.

FOCUS ON YOUR SENSES

Create a Wind-Down Routine

#1 - Sight

Focus on guided imagery, coloring mandalas, or pictures of a peaceful place. Directing your sight to something specific can help your mind calm itself.

#2 - Smell

Place a scented candle in your room or try aromatherapy. By adding a relaxing smell, you're gearing up to have a peaceful night's rest.

#3 - Touch

Prior to going to bed, take a warm bath to help start your relaxation and wind-down routine. A few other options would be self-massage or light yoga. Once you get into bed, try a weighted blanket for support and comfort.

#4 - Taste

Going to bed hungry can keep us awake. Try a sleep-friendly snack or chamomile tea prior to getting into bed for the evening.

#5 - Sound

A sound machine, white noise, or instrumental music can help calm our minds and bring our focus to the sounds we are hearing rather than the stressors in our life.

*"Tired minds don't plan well.
Sleep first, plan later."*

-Walter Reisch



Tips on Falling Asleep Quickly

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower the Temperature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eat a Healthy Dinner |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus on Breathing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exercise Daily |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Get on a Schedule | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Electronics |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Practice Meditation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limit Caffeine |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid Naps | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read Something |

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