

# Sleep Hygiene

If you struggle to get a good night's sleep, a sleep hygiene routine may be helpful. This routine helps you to downshift your nervous system by turning your attention inward and noticing what is happening in your inner landscape – your body, mind and emotions. With this routine, over a period of time, the body will come to understand the messages you are giving and will begin its transition upon your cue.

## **Sleep Hygiene Routine**

This routine should start approximately one hour before bed. Try to include as many of these practices as seems feasible for you.

### **One hour before bed:**

- No electronics – light from electronics and stimulated mental activity will keep your mind active
- Take a hot shower or bath – this is a great tension reliever!
- Dim the lights – this is a strong signal to the body that you are winding down for sleep
- No stimulating conversation – now may not be the best time to start an important conversation with your spouse. It may wind up your mind.
- Relaxing poses – here are a few good pre-bed poses:
  - Lie on your back and hug your knees to your chest; rock gently side to side
  - Windshield wipers – on your back, knees bent/feet on the floor, let your knees fall to one side then the other
  - Legs up the wall – lie on your back with your pelvis nearly touching the wall, legs extended up the wall. Stay here 5-10 minutes

### **In bed:**

- Try old-fashioned book reading. Use a bedside lamp, not bright overhead light

### **Lights out:**

- To quiet the mind, direct your awareness toward *feeling* the body. Become aware of the difference between thinking and feeling. When you notice that you are thinking, let go of the thought without judgment and return to feeling the body. The eyes and jaw are good places to feel. You might like to do a body scan.
- Give your mind a task like counting your breath cycles. Count your exhalations up to ten then backwards ten to one. Repeat as long as necessary. Remember to *feel* your breath.

### **During the day**

- Get some exercise
- Get exposed to natural light

### **Stick with the routine!**

Creating a new habit for the body takes time. Eventually the nervous system will get the “winding down” message and the process will go more quickly. Stick with it!