

HeadFIT

Sleep Well

To operate at our very best, we need to have the right amount of sleep. That will vary from person to person and be affected by a range of factors. Some things that keep you awake at night could be addressed with other HeadFIT tools so search the site to see what else might help. But whether you need 5 hours or 8, listen or watch along to this simple routine to help you drift off.

Sometimes, even after winding down before bed, your head will hit your pillow and suddenly be filled with racing thoughts. Perhaps you feel like that now, or you've felt like that for the last hour. This film is designed to help you pause the racing thoughts and come to a state of calm. You can watch along, or turn off your screen and listen with your eyes closed.

To start, make sure you're comfortable – ideally lying down on your back or on your side. Feel free to switch positions as the exercise continues, but try not to get restless or fidgety. As you get comfortable, take steady, slow, deep breaths – in through the nose, out through the mouth. As you breathe, notice the sensation of your chest rising and falling. Rest a hand on your stomach and feel as it moves with your breaths. Often when your mind is busy, you don't realise your body holds this tension too. Feel your weight sink into wherever you're lying and allow your limbs to become heavy and relaxed. Notice where you feel tense and un-clench those muscles. Your forehead, your eyes, your jaw, your shoulders. Relax your arms, hands and stomach. Unclench your legs and stretch out your toes. Allow your body to completely rest and keep breathing, deeply and slowly.

Sometimes it's useful to give a busy mind something to do, as a way to divert the busy thoughts down a better lane. Try this exercise with me – it's called Box Breathing. As the name suggests, box breathing involves visualizing a box with four sides to remind you of the pattern and length of each breath. You breathe in for 4, hold for 4, breathe out for 4, hold for 4, and then repeat. So, let's begin. After an exhale, breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, 3 seconds, 2 seconds, 1 second. Hold it for 4, 3, 2, 1. Breathe out, 4,3,2,1. And now hold for 4 to complete the box. As you breathe, try and imagine the lines being drawn with each second of your breathing. And again. In for 4, 3, 2, 1...hold for

4, 3, 2, 1...out for 4, 3, 2, 1....hold for 4, 3, 2, 1. And repeat. If it's easier, you can always change to 3 or 5 seconds. Keep going, and allow yourself to enter a deeper state of calm.