

A Better Night's Sleep

A Self-Help Guide



Is this guide for me – what is it about?

This guide is for people who use alcohol and other drugs and are experiencing difficulties with their sleep. If you are having problems falling asleep, or find that you often wake up either in the middle of the night or in the early mornings, this guide will be useful. It will help you to understand your patterns of sleep and identify the type(s) of sleeping problem(s) you experience. It also provides strategies that will assist you with managing and/or overcoming your sleeping difficulties.

You can choose to work through this guide on your own. If you think you need more support you can work through it with the help of your counsellor, nurse, case manager, or doctor. They can provide additional support, explanation, and education around sleeping difficulties and related problems.

You can also ring the **Alcohol and Drug Information Service**, a free, confidential telephone counselling line on **(08) 9442 5000** or **1800 198 024** (country only).

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Government of **Western Australia**
Drug and Alcohol Office



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1

An introduction to sleep

Sleep is a natural way of restoring your body's energy. A lack of good quality sleep can prevent your body and mind from working well, causing drowsiness, difficulty concentrating and lack of motivation.

How much sleep is enough?

The amount of sleep we need varies from person to person. It also tends to change throughout our lifetime. As we get older we tend to require less sleep. In order to feel refreshed and for our body and mind to work well, we need to go through the phases of light sleep, deep sleep, and dreaming sleep each night.



Types and stages of sleep

There are two main types of sleep:

Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep

During REM sleep, your eyes flicker rapidly behind closed lids, your body temperature is slightly raised, your heart beats faster and breathing is irregular. REM sleep is often described as dreaming sleep. You are likely to have four or five periods of REM sleep during a night. Most of it occurs during the last third of your sleeping time.

Non-Rapid Eye Movement (non-REM) sleep

There are four stages of non-REM sleep ranging from light sleep to deep sleep.

Stages 1 and 2 are the light sleep stages. During these stages your muscles begin to relax, your heartbeat becomes regular and your body temperature drops slightly. At these early stages you can still be woken easily, for example, if you hear a door slam or someone calls your name or shakes you.

Stages 3 and 4 of non-REM sleep are the deep sleep stages. During these stages your blood pressure drops, your body is inactive and it is difficult to be woken up. Most of the deep non-REM sleep is in the first part of the night. Dreams occurring during this stage are usually snapshots, incomplete, and may not make sense to you.

The sleep cycle

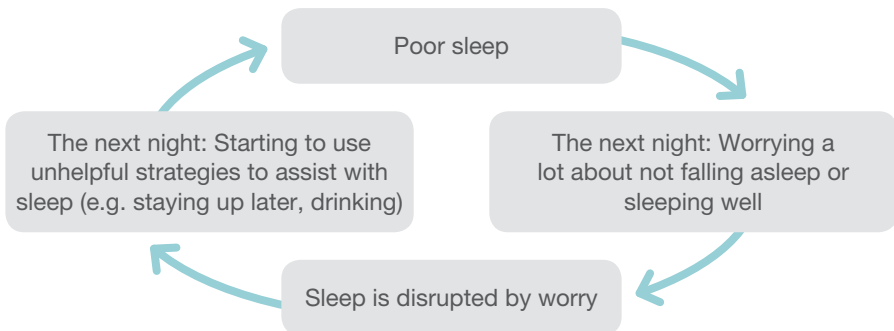
In a normal sleep cycle, non-REM and REM sleep alternate throughout the night. Sleep begins with about 80 minutes of non-REM sleep followed by about 10 minutes of REM sleep. This cycle is repeated three to six times per night. As the night progresses there is less deep sleep and more REM sleep per cycle.

2

An introduction to sleeping difficulties

Having difficulty sleeping is a very common issue that many people face. This may be a temporary problem, arising during times of increased stress, which resolves within a few days. However sometimes sleeping difficulties become a more lasting problem. When sleep problems persist it is considered insomnia. Around 20 to 25% of Australians suffer from some form of insomnia at some point in their lives.

When we begin to experience difficulty sleeping, our related thoughts and behaviours can result in the development of an interrupted pattern of sleep. An example of this is illustrated below.



Before looking at how to change these patterns, it is helpful first to get an understanding of what type of sleeping problem(s) you experience and what factors may be contributing to your interrupted sleep.

3

Understanding your sleeping difficulties

Which of these factors might be affecting your sleep?

Use of alcohol and other drugs

All substances can interfere with sleeping patterns and create sleeping difficulties.

- Drinking alcohol might make you sleepy initially, however it prevents you from having the kind of deep sleep that is necessary to feel refreshed and function well the next day.
- Caffeine and nicotine can interfere significantly with sleep as they have the effect of stimulating the body and mind. Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, soft drinks, energy drinks, and chocolate.
- Stimulant drugs such as amphetamines (ice, speed, dexamphetamine) have a severe effect on sleep. They cause pronounced disruptions in sleep patterns due to very long periods of wakefulness when intoxicated, followed by extended periods of drowsiness and sleep once the effects have worn off (often referred to as 'crashing').
- Benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, temazepam) are sometimes prescribed for short-term relief because of sleeping difficulties (for a period of 3-5 days), however the use of these substances actually prevents you from developing healthy sleeping patterns. The use of benzodiazepines can also lead to other problems, such as dependency. Consequently, the use of such medications is not a good solution for sleep difficulties.

Withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs

- During the initial phases of withdrawal from alcohol and/or other drugs the body and the mind are under significant stress and experience a process of marked adjustment. These physical and psychological effects (physical discomfort, anxiety, restlessness, nausea, low mood etc.) can have a significant impact on sleep.
- If you have been using substances to help you sleep, it is normal to find it hard to sleep without them at first.
- If you have been using amphetamines it may take longer to get into a healthy pattern of sleeping, as withdrawal from amphetamines has been shown to cause disrupted sleep patterns for up to six months after ceasing use. You may want to discuss these issues with your counsellor or doctor.

By using the appropriate strategies discussed later in this guide, you are likely to find that with time you are able to sleep without the use of substances and therefore your quality of sleep improves.

Medical conditions

- Asthma
- Heart problems
- Sleep apnoea (a condition where you stop breathing for a few seconds while asleep). This is very common and can cause difficulty getting to sleep and difficulty staying asleep. Most individuals are not aware that they have this condition and it is a frequent cause of tiredness. Anyone who has persistent sleep disturbance should consider obtaining a referral to one of the sleep centres.

These medical conditions can interfere with your breathing while sleeping and disrupt your cycle of sleep. If so, you should discuss this with your doctor.



ZZZ

Stress

Stress is the body's response to anything that appears threatening.

Experts suggest that 60-80% of sleep problems may be due to stress and worry. Worries may be about anything including family, money, friends, work, relationships, and alcohol or other drug problems.

Stress is a normal part of life and we respond and react to it in many different ways. While a certain level of stress is positive and can help people to achieve their goals, too much stress can cause problems, such as difficulty sleeping.

Mental health concerns

- Anxiety
 - Feeling anxious puts the body in a heightened state of alertness and makes it difficult to mentally 'switch off' and/or physically 'unwind'.
- Depression
 - When feeling down it is often hard to 'switch off' from our thoughts and you might find yourself spending a lot of time focusing on negative things, which makes it difficult to fall asleep.
 - Low mood often causes people to be inactive or feel like sleeping during the day, which can make it harder to sleep at night.
- Grief
 - The distress that arises when someone has experienced loss or death can often make it difficult to fall asleep and can sometimes cause nightmares.
- Trauma
 - People who have experienced trauma often find it difficult to sleep due to a number of factors, including nightmares of the traumatic event, fear of falling asleep, and being in a heightened state of alertness and awareness.

Please discuss with your doctor or counsellor if you have concerns about your mental health.

4

Tips for a better night's sleep

Practising the following strategies will assist you to slowly resume a better pattern of sleeping. Remember that changing old patterns and developing new ones takes time and practice.

This section provides a number of general strategies that are likely to help improve the quality of your sleep.

Sleep diary

Improving your sleep patterns can take time. The first step is to discover what might be stopping you from getting a better night's sleep. You will have already begun to think about this by answering the questions in section three. To get a really good understanding of your sleep difficulties it helps to keep track of your sleep patterns for a two week period by using a diary. It can also be helpful to discuss your diary with your doctor or counsellor so they can suggest specific strategies that may help.

Appendix A included at the end of this booklet provides an example of how to use your sleep diary.

Sleep hygiene

You may be asking what is sleep hygiene? It is a term used to describe good sleep habits; that is the things you can do to give yourself the best chance of a good refreshing sleep. Below are some tips on how you can do this.

1. Establish a sleep routine so that your body knows when you are getting ready for sleep. Having a regular bedtime routine teaches your body when it's time to go to sleep.
2. Have a soothing drink like camomile tea or a milky drink.
3. Have a warm bath, or a routine of washing your face and brushing your teeth.
4. Go to bed at the same time each night.
5. Get up at the same time every morning.
6. When in bed think of nice things (e.g. think of 5 positive things that happened that day – they might be big or small, such as a good conversation, seeing the sunshine, or hearing music on the radio).
7. Do a relaxed breathing exercise (one hand on your stomach, the other on your chest, deliberately slow your breathing, breathe deeply in your stomach instead of high in your chest). See Appendix C on Relaxation Strategies.
8. If you don't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get out of bed and go into another room (keep a torch and warm clothing near the bed so it is easier for you to get out of bed), do something mundane until you feel sleepy (e.g. reading), and return to bed only when you feel sleepy.
9. Repeat point 8 as often as you need until you fall asleep within 20 minutes.
10. Do not nap during the day.
11. Do not eat a heavy meal before bedtime.
12. Do not use electronic devices with a bright screen in bed prior to sleep.
13. Do not use your bed as an activity centre (i.e. use your bed only for sleeping and sexual activity).

Make your bedroom a pleasant place to be

- Get a nightlight
- Keep it clean and tidy
- Introduce pleasant smells such as a drop of lavender oil onto the pillow
- Get extra pillows
- Make sure that your home is safe e.g. doors locked, windows closed

Schedule ‘worry time’

- If you are lying in bed worrying about a lot of different things it can be helpful to get up, jot these worries down on a piece of paper, put the piece of paper away somewhere (e.g. in a drawer or a shoebox), and tell yourself you will come back to them in the morning – this is called scheduling ‘worry time’.
- If you know you are prone to worrying a lot when in bed, try doing the above steps as part of your routine before going to bed at night.
- If you have a particular problem that is causing you to worry when you get into bed, it may be helpful to work through a problem-solving exercise earlier in the day (see Appendix B).

Practice relaxation

- We find it much easier to get to sleep if we are already relaxed when we get into bed; although it is not always so easy to ‘be relaxed’!
- Learning how to relax is a skill – it requires practice.
- It often helps when you are learning to relax to listen to structured relaxation exercises, where someone else can guide you through the steps. (Appendix E includes a list of websites where you can access free online recordings of a range of different relaxation exercises).
- Try to find time each day to practice one of these exercises.



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Managing your sleeping difficulties

This section provides suggestions on how to manage the particular sleeping difficulties you experience.

Which of these describes you best?

- Coping with difficulty falling asleep
- Coping with waking during the night
- Coping with waking too early
- Coping with bad dreams

Coping with difficulty falling asleep

- Don't use bedtime as worry time.
- Schedule a 'worry time' each day (see page 12).
- Use a problem-solving exercise if you are worried about a particular problem (see Appendix B).
- Notice your thoughts but don't buy into them. Tell yourself that you will spend time worrying about that thought in the morning, right now you are going to sleep.
- To fall asleep you need to be both relaxed and drowsy. Slow deep breathing and relaxation techniques can help. The body carries out some physical and mental healing when relaxed so if you can't sleep you can help yourself by putting your body in a relaxed state. (See Appendix C for breathing and relaxation exercises).

- Sometimes looking over your sleep diary can help you realise that you are actually getting more sleep than you believe you are. Reviewing your diary can reassure you even if you don't fall asleep straight away, that you can still get a reasonable amount of sleep once you do drift off.
- Choose a wake up time that suits you and stick to it every day of the week.
- Set a regular time to go to bed. Calculate how much sleep you are getting each night. Engaging in activities to help you feel sleepy can be helpful (see Sleep Hygiene). You can set this bedtime as a goal to gradually work towards.
- Once you have started to fall asleep sooner and have slept better, increase your sleep time by going to bed 30 minutes earlier. If you find yourself awake for more than 40 minutes each night do not extend your time in bed.
- After a few more nights if you are still falling asleep easily and remaining asleep make your bedtime another 30 minutes earlier. Continue this step until you are getting enough sleep.

Coping with waking during the night

- Keep a night light (or torch) for trips to the toilet so you don't turn on a bright light (this can wake you up more).
- Have water near the bed so you don't have to go to the kitchen for a drink.
- If you find yourself lying awake in bed use relaxation techniques (see Appendix C).
- Don't stay in bed tossing and turning and worrying that you cannot sleep. If you can't sleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something mundane outside your room until you feel sleepy again, then go back to bed.
- When you go back to sleep, don't sleep in. Set an alarm at the set time because you actually want to be tired the following night to 're-set' your sleeping patterns. Sleeping in will prevent you from feeling tired the following night and can cause your sleep to remain disrupted.

Coping with waking too early

- Look at what you can do to the room to make it more sleep friendly, e.g. is your room too light in the morning? Is it too noisy?
- If you are lying awake in the early hours of the morning try to use relaxation techniques (see Appendix C).
- Lie quietly and rest.
- Write down your thoughts, and remind yourself that you can worry about these thoughts during your scheduled 'worry time'.
- Exercise during the day. Your body will not be ready for a long sleep if you have rested all day.

Coping with bad dreams

Coping with bad dreams can be difficult. Below are some strategies that can help you deal with these difficult experiences. These strategies can also be helpful if you find it difficult to relax before going to sleep, or are scared of letting go, and falling asleep.

- Prepare yourself in case you have bad dreams by consciously thinking of a bad dream, then think of a different ending for it. Practice this new ending many times before going to sleep.
- Before going to sleep prepare to re-orient yourself when you wake from a bad dream. You can do this by reminding yourself that you are at home and that you are safe. Imagine your street, buses, local shops. Put a damp towel or a bowl of water by the bed to splash your face, place a special object by the bed, such as a photograph, or a small soft toy.
- When you wake up from a bad dream move your body if you can and reorient yourself immediately (by touching an object, wetting your face, going to the window, talking to yourself in a reassuring way).

Alternative techniques for reorienting yourself to the present can be found in Appendix D on Grounding techniques.

If your bad dreams are related to real events that you have experienced, in addition to trying the strategies described in Appendix D it is advisable that you seek formal support from a counsellor or clinical psychologist.

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Helpful contacts

Sleep clinics

Respiratory Sleep Disorders Clinic Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Verdun Street, Nedlands

This is a public clinic which offers:

- Assessment and diagnosis of sleep difficulties.
- Advice regarding lifestyle changes including diet, reduction in alcohol and sedative use, smoking cessation.
- Dental devices – for the treatment of snoring and milder forms of obstructive sleep apnoea.
- Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) – the delivery of a constant low pressure of air to the upper airway via a nose or face mask during sleep.
- Non-Invasive ventilation (NIV) – the delivery of intermittent positive airway pressure via a nose or face mask to mechanically assist breathing, particularly during sleep.
- Surgery – where a surgically correctable condition exists.

Phone: (08) 9346 2422

Website: www.wasdri.org.au



St John of God Sleep Centre Leederville

This is a private service which assists with monitoring, diagnosing and managing a wide range of respiratory and sleep disorders.

The Centre offers a wide range of services including adult sleep testing and treatment for sleep apnoea, adult respiratory testing and paediatric sleep testing.

Phone: (08) 9382 6855

Website: www.sjog.org.au/hospitals/subiaco_hospital/hospital_services/other_services/sleep_centre/adult_sleep_services.aspx

Perth Sleep Clinic Mount Hospital Medical Centre

This is a private service which offers:

- Supervised sleep monitoring (inpatient).
- Portable monitoring services (outpatient).
- Sleep diaries and actigraphy (a non-invasive approach to monitoring sleeping patterns).
- Continued positive airway pressure therapy for sleep apnoea.
- Respiratory function testing.

Phone: (08) 9481 2244

Website: www.mounthospital.com.au/index.php/138/perth-sleep-clinic

Other resources

Sleep Disorders Association of Australia WA Branch

This is a volunteer run organisation which creates awareness in the community about sleep disorders and provides support to people who suffer from sleep disorders, informing them of the latest treatment through guest speakers and a newsletter. Services include brochures/posters, advice, information and group meetings.

Phone: (08) 93321037

Website: www.sleepoz.org.au

The Sleep Health Foundation

This is a national website which offers an extensive range of fact sheets relating to different types of sleep problems, tip sheets on how to improve sleep, and provides answers to frequently asked questions.

Website: www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au

Appendix A

Sleep diary

Day	Time of getting to bed	Time taken to fall asleep	Number times woken up	Time spent awake during the night	Time of waking up in the morning	Time of getting up	Daytime naps

Appendix B

Problem-solving steps

Below are 5 steps to follow when you are attempting to solve a problem. Always problem-solve by writing things down. Focus on one problem at a time.

1. Identify the problem

Experiencing problems is a part of everyday life. It is useful to view problems as challenges, not catastrophes. It is important to stop and think – do not try to solve the problem by acting immediately. It is important to clearly define your problem.

2. Brainstorm all solutions

Write down even those that may seem crazy or impractical. Each problem has a large number of potential solutions. Be creative and come up with as many ideas as possible.

3. Weigh up the costs and benefits of each solution

Before making a decision weigh up each solution and identify what is likely to happen if you try each one. Consider the pros and cons of each. Is the strategy possible? Is it likely to be effective?

4. Choose the best solutions

Once you have looked at the costs and the benefits of each solution you need to choose ones that are best for you. Delete any solutions that are clearly not acceptable. Choosing solutions does not necessarily mean that you choose the ones that have the most positives and the least negatives. You need to choose what you think will be best for you based on what is important to you. What might be an acceptable solution for you may not be as attractive or possible for someone else.

5. Put a plan in place

If this does not work out, look at what happened and try and identify new solutions. It is important to set short-term realistic goals when you are putting a plan in place.

Appendix C

Relaxation strategies

Deep breathing

When you are stressed, you will notice that your breath becomes shallow and irregular and your chest feels tight.

Deep breathing means breathing deeply into the bottom of your lungs before slowly breathing all the air out again (it can help to imagine breathing into your lower belly). This will allow your chest to loosen and your whole body to relax.

Try the following exercise:

- Place your hands, fingers linked, just below your ribs.
- Breathe deeply into the bottom of your lungs for a count of 5. Your fingers should separate a little as you breathe in.
- Breathe out fully for a count of 5.
- Repeat this breathing pattern 5 times.

Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and relaxing the various parts of your body.

Getting ready

- As you are doing this exercise take note of the sensations in your body.
- Compare the tense feeling to the relaxed feeling.
- Focus on what you doing.
- If your thoughts are wandering bring them back by focusing on your breathing.
- Take 3 deep breaths, exhaling slowly each time, imagine the tension draining out of your body.
- Clench your fists. Hold for 10 seconds before releasing and feel the tension draining out of your body (for 15 seconds).
- Tighten your biceps (upper arms) by drawing your forearms up toward your shoulders and make a muscle with both arms. Hold, then relax.

- Tighten your triceps (the muscles underneath your upper arms) by holding out your arms in front of you and locking your elbows. Hold, then relax.
- Tense the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can. Hold, then relax.
- Tense the muscles around your eyes by clenching your eyelids shut. Hold, then relax. Imagine sensations of deep relaxation spreading all over your eyes.
- Tighten your jaws by opening your mouth so widely that you can stretch the muscles around the hinges of your jaw. Hold, then relax.
- Tighten the muscles in the back of your neck by pulling your head way back, as if you were going to touch your head to your back. Hold, then relax.
- Take deep breaths and focus on the weight of your head sinking into whatever surface it is resting.
- Tighten your shoulders as if you are going to touch your ears. Hold, then relax.
- Tighten the muscles in your shoulder blades. Hold, then relax.
- Tighten the muscles of your chest by taking a deep breath. Hold, then relax.
- Tighten your buttocks by pulling them together. Hold, then relax.
- Squeeze the muscles in your thighs (top part of your legs). Hold, then relax.
- Tighten your calf muscles (bottom part of your legs) by pulling your toes towards you. Hold, then relax.
- Tighten your feet by curling them downwards. Hold, then relax.
- Mentally scan your body for any tension. If any tension remains, repeat the exercise for those muscles groups.
- When you are at the end of your relaxation exercise gently stretch your muscles and keep your movements slow and gentle.

Appendix D

Grounding techniques

Grounding is a strategy that can help you to cope if you find that you are feeling very distressed before going to sleep, or after waking up from a nightmare. Grounding exercises help you to detach so that you can gain control over your feelings and stay safe. It is a strategy that anchors you to the present. It involves focusing on the outside world rather than what's going on inside your mind or your body.

Guidelines for using grounding

- You can do grounding any time, any place, anywhere, and no one has to know.
- Use grounding when you feel too much (overwhelming emotions and memories), too little (numb, dissociated, or spaced out), when you are faced with a trauma trigger, enraged, or craving to use. Grounding puts healthy distance between you and these negative feelings.
- Focus on the present, not the past or the future.
- Grounding is not the same as relaxation. Grounding is much more active, focuses on distraction strategies, and is intended to help when you are feeling very distressed. It can be more effective than relaxation for some problems.

Grounding activities

If you are using grounding to help when you wake up from a nightmare, it can be helpful first to practice the exercises during the day – it's good to get an idea of which ones are the most effective for you. You may also have things you already do to calm yourself when you are feeling very distressed. Add these to the list below.

- Name and look at 5 things around you.

1

2

3

4

5

- Name and smell 5 things around you.

1

2

3

4

5

- Name and touch 5 things around you.

1

2

3

4

5

- Name and listen to 5 things around you.

1

2

3

4

5

- Touch objects around you, say their names, and explore them using your senses.
- Look at a painting on the wall and describe everything you can see in detail.
- Look out the window and describe everything you can see outside in detail.
- Describe an everyday activity in detail, such as how you cook a particular meal.
- Make encouraging statements to yourself, such as: 'You can do this', 'just hang in there'.
- Think of a place where you have felt calm and peaceful: remember everything about it, using your senses.
- As you breathe, on the exhale say something calming such as 'relax' 'it's ok'.

Appendix E

Online Relaxation Recordings

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/services_and_facilities/counselling_services/stress_and_your_wellbeing/relaxation_recordings
- <http://www.clinpsychcentre.com.au/app.php?applD=4>

Mindfulness

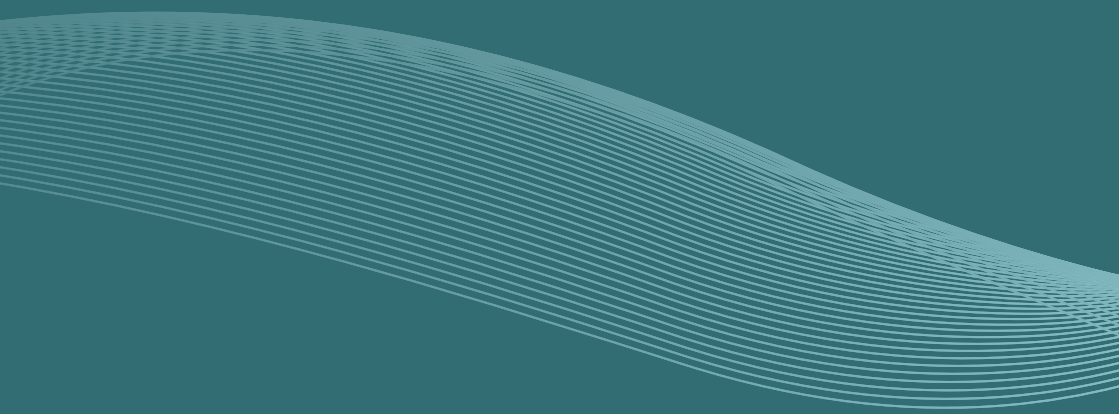
- <http://services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel/resources/audio/mindfulness>
- http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/services_and_facilities/counselling_services/stress_and_your_wellbeing/relaxation_recordings
- <http://www.livingwell.org.au/mindfulness-exercises-3/>

Breathing

- <http://www.livingwell.org.au/mindfulness-exercises-3/5-breathing-mindfulness/>
- <http://services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel/resources/audio/breath>

Sleep

- http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/services_and_facilities/counselling_services/stress_and_your_wellbeing/relaxation_recordings



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