

2 Minute Takeaways

When the attention is focused the incessant chattering of the mind quiets naturally, and we become oblivious to outer or inner distractions. Commence all of the following techniques by correcting your posture. Uncross your legs, straighten your back, place your hands on your thighs, close your eyes and take a centering breath saying to yourself 'let go, relax.'

Three stage Breath

Place your hands one on top of the other on your belly. Take a breath into your belly filling the lower part of your lungs, now expand the breath and fill your chest, the middle part of your lungs, lastly sniff an extra amount of breath in and then sigh the breath out through your mouth. Repeat this three-stage breath 3-6 times.

'Ha Breath'

You can either do this in standing or sitting.

Take a full breath in and raise your arms forward and then up above your head, breathing in and holding your breath as you do so. Breathe out through your mouth saying 'ha', whilst at the same time swinging your arms back down in front of you and also bending your knees so that you go into a semi squat position, keep your arms swinging freely. Repeat this "ha" breath 3-6 times.

Circuit Breath

This breath involves visualising the breath coming in and out of certain points of the body that follow a circuit. The points are the 1.crown of your head 2. the point between your eyes [your third eye] 3.your heart centre 4.your belly 5.the point between your legs 6.your lower back 7.base of your neck 8.the top of your spine and back to the crown of your head. Start by breathing in through the crown of your head, out through your third eye, in through your heart centre, out through your belly, in through the point between your legs, out through the point at your lower back, in through the base of your neck, out through the top of your spine and in through the crown of your head, and continue on around the circuit.

If you lose where you are up to in breathing in or out, don't worry about that just ensure that you always take a breath in at the crown of your head. Repeat this circuit breath 3-6 times.

Single Focus

Choose a single object to be your focal point. It may be an object like a flower or a candle, or perhaps a photo of a favourite thing or place. You may repeat a single word each time you breathe out. Try to give this point of focus your whole attention for 2 mins. You could start this exercise with one of the breathing techniques if you choose.

Visualise

Visualisation is the internal image or series of images. You could imagine yourself in your favourite place where you feel safe and relaxed, sitting next in a tranquil garden or next to a waterfall or a comforting open fire. Explore this place with all your senses [sight, sound, smell, taste, feel] and stay focussed on this for two minutes.

Breath Counting (between 4-21 breaths)

- Find a comfortable position, chair
- Close your eyes and shift your focus to your breath
- Focus your attention at the tip of your nose
- Count each breath on exhalation
- Count in your mind each exhalation (1,2,3 etc.)
- Observe the flow of air as you breathe in and out through your nose
- If you have difficulty with this, part your lips slightly as you inhale and exhale
- Don't let your mind wander from the tip of your nose
- If your mind does wander bring it back and place your focus on your breath

Visualisation Meditation (2 minutes)

- Have relaxing music playing
- Find a comfortable and quiet spot
- Gently close your eyes and imagine your favourite place where you feel safe and relaxed
- You may be sitting on a beach watching the waves crash upon the shore, sitting next to a waterfall or sitting in a beautiful garden listening to the birds sing
- Explore this place with all your senses (sight, sound, smell, and touch)
- Focus on this beautiful place for two minutes
- Set an alarm to remind you when the 2 minutes is up, or longer if you wish

Some ideas for your favourite place

- Sitting on the beach watching the waves crash on the shore.
- Sitting in a beautiful garden hearing the birds sing.
- Sitting near a waterfall or an open campfire



<u>My Sleep Plan</u>
Changes I could make
1.
2.
3.
Strategies I will try
1.
2.
3.
Notes to self

To get more support around these strategies call MS Connect on free call 1800 042 138

Sleep tips

There are a number of generic solutions which can be relatively easy and cost efficient in making positive improvements to your sleep. Remember to make alterations that suit you. Consider your symptoms and your own likes and dislikes.

Before you get into bed

Make sure your bed is comfortable. Consider ease of movement and good body support. Look for a good quality firm mattress that supports the spine, your body shouldn't stay in the middle of the bed. Use of a bed board between the mattress and base can make a bed firmer.

How old is your pillow? Is your pillow too flat, too lumpy? Perhaps it's time to purchase a more comfortable pillow?

Heated waterbed or airbeds. These can help support weight evenly and assist in pain management and comfort for joint pain. An electric blanket or woollen underlay can also provide heat when sleeping. Electric blankets should be used following manufacturer's instructions. If you experience over heating due to your MS then this would not be a suitable solution.

Find a comfortable sleep position. Use of small pillows in the right place can relieve pain.

Elevate the bed head. Lifting the bed head using wooden blocks 100- 150mm can assist in alleviation of heartburn or gastric reflux.

Keep the room a comfortable temperature.

There are also a number of other steps a person can take which may contribute to sleeping well. There are a number of issues worth considering, some will require very little change some may involve a little more conscious effort.

Ideas to improve sleep include:

- Limit or avoid caffeine: - Caffeine is a stimulant that can keep you awake. Tea also contains caffeine. Cola and other soft drinks as well as chocolate contain caffeine. Avoid caffeine late in the day. The maximum daily intake of coffee should be 2-3 cups, and tea 4-5 cups.
- Establish a regular bed time. This helps to establish a healthy sleep-wake cycle. Wake at consistent times, don't be tempted to make up for lost sleep. Get your body into a routine. Turn your clock so you can't see the time. Try to go to bed so you have enough time to wake naturally.
- Creating a bedtime ritual prepares your body for rest. A nightly ritual can signal the body that sleep is eminent. Avoid TV or computer 1 hour before bed. One hour before bed, start your bedtime routine e.g. change into pyjamas, make lunch for work tomorrow, brush your teeth; make it your own routine so you can wind down

the day. Make the last ½ hour before sleep a time for relaxing, calming activities like listening to soothing music, or reading a book.

- If you need to nap, do so in the afternoon. Do not nap after dinner. Shorten your nap time.
- Create a tranquil environment. Create a bedroom that is a tranquil haven. Decorate your room with colours, artwork, and fabrics which you find restful. Ban televisions, computers from the bedroom. Clear away the clutter in your bedroom and under your bed.
- Exercise outdoors daily. Exercise can help keep with stress, anxiety, and depression. Exercise 30 minutes a day. Avoid exercising 3 hours before bed. Exercising outdoors can assist with melatonin production and in turn enhance regular sleep cycles. Exercise at regular times each day. Exercise can assist in obtaining sleep quality as well as establishing a regular pattern to your day.
- Avoid exercising before bed as this can work as a stimulant.
- Eat and drink for restful sleep. Eat dinner at least 3 hours before bed, gives your body time to complete digestion. However a light snack before bed can help if your blood sugar drops at night and triggers middle of the night awakenings. Choose a protein rich food and avoid high sugar content foods. It is suggested that a glass of warm milk at bed time instead of eating may be beneficial.
- Enhance sleep with aromatherapy. Lavender, Marjoram, Orange oils can be calming. Lavender essential oil has been proven to enhance sleep.
- Relaxation exercises, deep breathing or visualisation can be of benefit. These techniques have been shown to lower stress hormones alleviate muscle tension. Practice and learn the exercises in bed. Using a CD is the easiest way.
- Herbal help for sleep. Chamomile, lemon balm, and passionflower are natural sedatives. 1 cup of chamomile tea or lemon balm tea ½ hour before bed. 1 teaspoon of passionflower diluted into ¼ cup of water 15 minutes before bed.
- Don't stay in bed. If our are having a particularly difficult time falling asleep then get up, DONT put on bright lights (this can trigger melatonin levels to decrease which signals it's time to wake up). Listen to soothing music or a relaxation CD.
- Sleep in complete darkness or as close to it as possible. When light hits the eyes, it disrupts the circadian rhythm of the pineal gland and production of melatonin and serotonin.
- Some people find taking a hot bath or shower before bed facilitates sleep. If you find that you are sensitive to heat this would be counterproductive.
- Avoid smoking before bedtime. Nicotine is a stimulant found in cigarettes.

- Avoid diet pills as many contain stimulants which interfere with sleep.
- Avoid diuretics before bedtime. Take diuretics in the morning so that the urge to urinate does not affect you sleep. Do not limit the amount the fluid you consume during the day unless your doctor has recommended it, but it may be beneficial to limit your fluid intake before you go to bed. Speak to your doctor if night time toileting interrupts your sleep
- Limit or avoid alcohol intake. Alcohol can have an instant sedative effect but excess alcohol stimulates the release of cortisol which can cause restless sleep. Alcohol intake can effect a person's ability to fall into the deep sleep stage; when the healing process occurs. Alcohol can also be responsible for frequent waking during the night.
- Use your bed and bedroom for sleep only