



Exercise:

# INSOMNIA MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

## ABOUT THIS EXERCISE

These exercises are designed to help you when you have problems sleeping. Before starting the exercises it is important to understand what happens when we sleep and why we get insomnia.

When we sleep, we're not just resting, we're processing and filing the experiences of the day in order to figure out what they mean and to store them in our memory. When we are stressed our brain tries to help us by recalling images and emotions of similar problems we faced in the past. The brain does this as a problem-solving mechanism, however, this often makes us anxious as we experience these memories as failures rather than successes.

This can cause two types of insomnia:

- 1) An inability to fall asleep as the brain will not switch off
- 2) Waking in the middle of the night and being unable to go back to sleep.

The exercises below are designed to aid sleep and help you rest.

## HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE

### Preparing to sleep: Establishing a routine

If you are having problems falling asleep it is important to calm your mind. The best way to do this is by establishing a routine that you follow every day.

- Take a hot bath or shower an hour before going to bed. Your body temperature will rise, then it will gradually decrease making you sleepy.
- Get into bed and drink a cup of tea.
- Read a book or watch a TV show. Avoid the news or anything violent. If possible, choose a program that will make you laugh.
- Do a breathing and/or a mindfulness meditation exercise.

### Preparing to sleep: Mindfulness exercise

#### 1. Breathing technique:

When you are about to fall asleep, lay on your back and start to breathe using the techniques described in the exercise diaphragmatic breathing.

- Breathe through your nose, stomach first, in a four-second count.
- Hold your breath for four seconds.
- Exhale through your nose, stomach first, in a four-second count.
- Hold your breath for four seconds.
- Repeat this exercise three times.

#### 2. Managing negative thoughts:

While you are breathing you may get negative thoughts. Acknowledge these thoughts and put them to one side. Trust that you will be able to resolve them and to do so you will need a rested body and mind.

### 3. Meditation

While you are laying down, visualize yourself walking in a place that you like. Try to imagine all the details of that place, including the sounds, colors, temperature, and sensations.

#### Dos and don'ts when dealing with insomnia

1. Don't grab your phone. Cell phones radiate a light that tricks the brain into thinking it's daytime and stops you from sleeping.
2. Get out of bed, drink water, walk, and stretch. While you walk, stretch your hands open and gently close them.
3. Watch something relaxing on TV, listen to music, or draw.
4. When you're ready to return to bed, don't cover up. Wait until you cool down a bit and then cover up; you'll feel more comfortable and it will be easier to get back to sleep.
5. Don't worry if you only have a few hours of sleep left; that will only make you feel more anxious.

