

Lesson 4

Overcoming Worry and Sleep Soundly

Introduction

Wouldn't it be great to fall asleep as soon as your head touched the pillow? Feeling the waves of impending unconsciousness that elude so many of us...

You might have the perfect Sleep Sanctuary if you followed the tips in the last lesson, but if you are still struggling to get a good night's sleep, what else is going on?

How many times have you lay awake worrying about everything under the sun? Too many to count? And why do you sometimes only tend to worry when your head hits the pillow?

There are numerous ways of helping reduce the effects of worry on your sleep.

To repay your 'sleep debt' and 'feel the waves,' spending time on expressing your worries a few hours before bedtime can work.

The science

Worrying at bedtime affects the quantity and quality of sleep you achieve.

Research shows that you are more likely to notice the memories you would rather not have when your brain is idle. The more poignant the emotion that is attached to the memory, the more frequent you will think about it.

As these memories belong to a network, when activated, other similar ones are too. This results in a chain of unwanted memories that are of concern to you and can stop you falling asleep.

If you have young children and work long hours, the only time you might have to reflect on the day's events is shortly before bedtime.

Earmarking time to process your thoughts and feelings is an effective way of clearing the 'backlog' and puts your mind in a more powerful position to sleep.

Why this helps

There is a close relationship between mind and body. To fall soundly asleep, you need to enjoy a certain level of comfort and ease with both. Allotting time to spend on your worries can help reduce the likelihood of them appearing at bedtime.

Exercise

For this exercise, you will need 10 minutes.

Worry Time

Reserve a time each day when you can fully think about anything that is worrying you. Problem-solve it by putting pen to paper if necessary or talking it through with someone else.

Journal to work through worries

- What is going on in your life? What are your current thoughts and feelings? What is your main concern? What are you worried about right now?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Reflect on it. Take a moment to relax, be still, breathe, and focus. Start sentences with "I" statements like "I feel...", "I want...", "I have ... and, "I think..." Try to use the present tense, e.g. "Today...", "Right now...", or "At the moment...".
- Aim to write for a maximum of 15 minutes.

Worries for Today

Worry 1

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Can I Solve It?

Yes ↓ What Can I Do? <u>When Can I Do It?</u> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center; vertical-align: top;"> ↓ Immediately ↓ 'Let Go' of the worry ↓ </td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center; vertical-align: top;"> ↓ Soon ↓ </td> </tr> </table>	↓ Immediately ↓ 'Let Go' of the worry ↓	↓ Soon ↓	No ↓ "Let It Go" (Remind yourself that it's natural to worry)
↓ Immediately ↓ 'Let Go' of the worry ↓	↓ Soon ↓		

If the worries come back at bedtime, simply remind yourself that you have already thought them through. Then, focus on your breathing and the rise and fall of your abdomen.

What have you learnt?

Problem solving any worries way before bedtime is a great way to stop them interfering with your sleep.

If you have dealt with them, what is more to do?

What next?

For another useful tip on getting your forty winks, you will love our next lesson. You will learn a technique that is from mindfulness and this helps you concentrate on the moment.