

Sleeping like a baby

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Sleep is essential to our health. If sleep is disturbed, our entire balance is affected. Fortunately, yoga practice is one of the best ways to regain the happiness of a restful sleep.

Lying in bed in the evening and feeling good, like in a small cocoon, falling asleep pleasantly, having serene and pleasant dreams and finally waking up spontaneously and in a good mood should be the rule for everyone. However, this is often not the case. Insomnia, nocturnal awakenings, restless leg syndrome, nightmares, sleep apnea, sleepwalking, feelings of not recovering are so many disorders that can spoil our night, not to mention the consequences during the day!

If I had to give a quick answer to the question “what is the purpose of sleep?”, I would say: to avoid cancer, depression, high blood pressure, eating disorders, weight gain, diabetes and finally to avoid being in a bad mood and to lack energy!

Sleep is far from being a time when we are passive. When we sleep, the body is active to put everything back in order. Your immune system regenerates, your blood pressure drops, and you dream. These dream phases allow you to “digest” your emotions from the previous couple of days. It is during this phase that you are able to classify your memories and free yourself from their emotional charge.

The first condition for a good quality sleep is to feel safe and calm. If you are in a strong emotional state, angry, sad, worried or excited, you will not be able to sleep. This is where yoga comes in, helping you to regain your state of serenity.

You'll start with some stretching to trap tensions and eliminate them. You can also practice twisting postures. Then you will continue with closing postures such as yoga mudra, half-bridge, supported shoulderstand and plow pose. These postures will allow you to empty your lungs, increase your breathing amplitude and stimulate your recovery system by activating the parasympathetic system. You will be led to feel more serenity, and your body will be available to fall asleep.

These exercises take you, so to speak, to the platform of the station where the sleep train is, but they do not plunge you into sleep. To fall asleep, you can, even in the middle of the night when you wake up again, use a Yoga Nidra practice, followed by a self-hypnosis technique.

One sleep cycle less

With age, from 55-60, the architecture of your sleep reorganizes itself, and you will have to accept the idea that you will have one less sleep cycle. In this case, there is no need to fight for sleep, it is better to get up and do something for an hour and a half and then go back to bed when you feel the urge to fall asleep again. You can compensate for this cycle by taking a nap or a Yoga Nidra of at least 30 minutes in the afternoon.

The practice to prepare for sleep

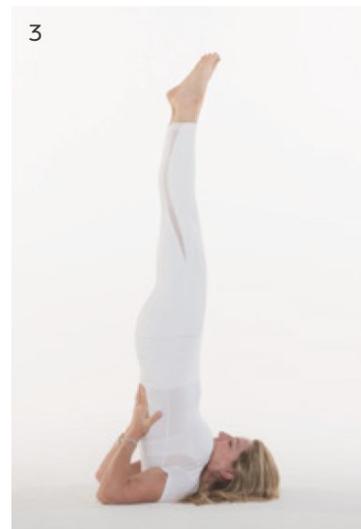


1. Yoga mudra

Sit cross-legged, in the posture that suits you best (photo 1a). Grasp your left wrist behind your back with your right hand. Exhale while bending forward (photo 1b). Inhale as you come back up. Hold your breath, turn left, exhale by moving your forehead down towards your left knee. Inhale as you move upwards, facing the knee. Turn to the right while holding your breath. Exhale as you descend your forehead to the right knee. Inhale as you move back up and finally exhale by leaning forward. Stay in the posture and breathe calmly. Remember to exhale and relax your head. Relax the jaws, the tongue... Stay about ten breaths. Then inhale while coming back up and exhale while putting your hands on your knees. Remain to enjoy.

2. Half-bridge

Arms at your sides, palms facing the ground. Place the heels, slightly apart, close to the buttocks (photo 2a). Inhale and exhale as you move up the pelvis. Inhale as you descend vertebrae by vertebrae. Repeat the exercise 3 times while keeping the momentum. Then raise the pelvis and remain 8 to 12 slow, deep breaths (photo 2b). Enjoy the stretching of the neck and the opening of the plexus. When you come back, be aware of the relaxation and saliva secretion which is a sign of the stimulation of the parasympathetic system that reinforces your ability to relax and recover.



3. Supported shoulder-stand

Inhale while lifting your legs. Exhale while pushing on your hands and lifting your legs vertically. Stay in the posture. Ankles, hips and shoulders are aligned (photo 3). Take notice of all the sensations. Remain 8 to 12 breaths and come back by folding your legs, knees on your forehead, then lowering your body while remaining in a closed ball.



4. Plow pose

Same starting posture as sarvangasana - the half-bridge. On the exhale, take your legs backwards, feet flexing towards the ground. Stay in that posture breathing calmly for 8 to 12 breaths (photo 4). Take notice of the sensations. Come back while thoroughly controlling your return. Immediately take a compensation posture for the lower back. Remain a few moments in the posture.

The practice to fall asleep

5. Rotation of the conscious

Lie down on the floor, arms at your sides, comfortably (photo 5). Pay attention to each part of your body. Start with your left foot and work your way up the leg to your face, over your pelvis, stomach and chest. Then start again with your left hand and work your way up along the arm to the face and start again with your right foot and finally your right hand. You must "feel" the different parts of your body and induce relaxation.



6. Self-hypnosis

Take a pleasant and safe position, for example in a foetal position (photo 6). Make sure you feel the pleasant sensation in your body when you curl up into a ball. Now mentally recite this short text: "I will count to 10. At 10, I will sleep soundly. I will be in a deep sleep state. Very deep. At 10, I will sleep, my whole body will be heavy and dense, my breathing slow and soothed." And then you count from one to ten, keeping your mind on the numbers. See them coming into your head. After the numbers 3, 6 and 9, mentally repeat again that you will sleep deeply at 10.



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Doctor and yoga professor for over 30 years, he runs the Institut de YogaThérapie in Paris (www.idyt.com) and has published several books on the subject with the Editions Odile Jacob. The latest book to be published is *Le vrai nom du bonheur est sérénité*, ed. Kéro.
