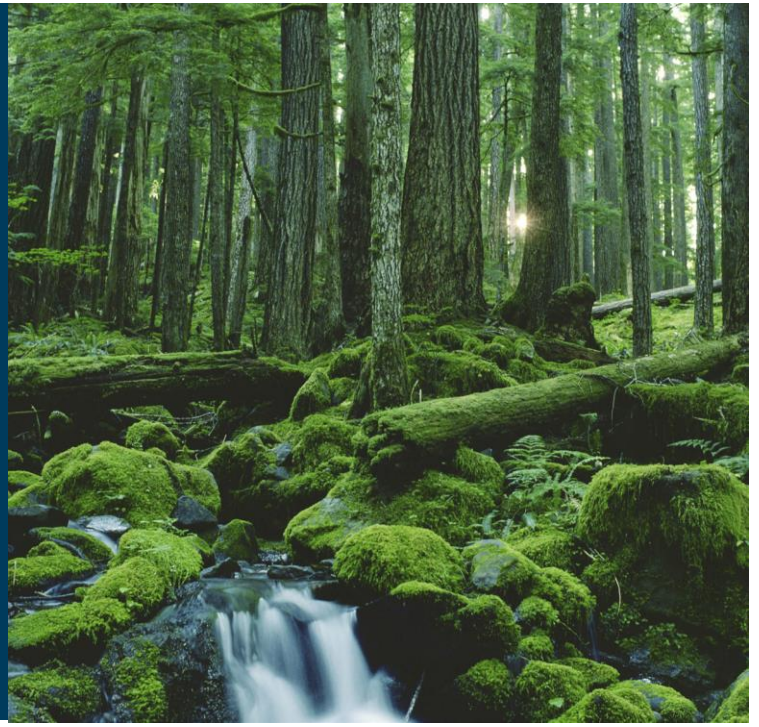


# An Evening Ritual

## An Integrative Approach to Sleep



### Treatment

- Be mindful of the basic rhythm of daily life by establishing a regular bed and rising time, getting exposure to early morning light and evening dim light, and maintaining regular times for meals and exercise. You should avoid napping if you have insomnia.
- Manage caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and other drugs. Caffeinated foods and drinks can affect some people up to 12 hours later. Even if you do not think caffeine affects you, it may be interfering with the quality of your sleep.
- Although regular and adequate cardiovascular exercise promotes healthy sleep, it should be avoided at least 3 to 4 hours before going to bed as it raises your core body temperature, which can interfere with sleep.
- Avoid high-glycemic and harder-to-digest foods as bedtime snacks. As an alternative, consider complex carbohydrates (such as whole grains, lentils and beans) that may help transport tryptophan, a precursor to melatonin, across the blood-brain barrier.
- Avoid clock-watching at night, since it draws you back to waking consciousness. Ideally, position the clock away from the bed or use a non-illuminated battery-operated clock to avoid light and subtle electromagnetic field radiation.
- Manage hyperarousal and anxiety with cognitive behavioral therapy, body-mind techniques and guided imagery.
- Create a healthy sleep environment by keeping the bedroom cool (about 68 degrees), completely dark, quiet, psychologically safe and green.
- Manage bed and bedroom stimulation, which can condition these areas for wakefulness, by using the bed only for sleep and intimacy. Go to bed only when sleepy.
- Ask your doctor about using a botanical supplement, such as valerian or hops, for sleep for the short term. Melatonin is useful when there is advancing age or circadian irregularities. Always use supplements with other sleep hygiene recommendations.
- Understand that letting go and surrendering are key to sleep onset. In the end, we cannot finagle sleep. We can set the stage and be receptive to it, but we cannot intentionally “go to sleep.” Efforts to do so typically backfire.

Adapted from/courtesy of University of Arizona Integrative Medicine Fellowship handout (used with permission).