

ASMR

SOUNDS, WHISPERS AND TRIGGERS FOR SLEEP

MODULE 2 • BALANCED LIFE • WHOLE-PERSON PROGRAM



ASMR Defined – Sounds, Whispers and Triggers for Sleep

<https://www.sleepassociation.org/sleep-products/asmr>

ASMR stands for Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response and is described by many who experience this as a tingling sensation that starts in the head or neck and travels down the spine. It can make you feel relaxed, calm or even make you feel like you could fall asleep. The internet, including YouTube, is flooding right now with information on “ASMR.”

If you’ve ever had this feeling, it may have been during a massage, while someone brushes your hair, whispers in your ear, or you hear certain (usually dull, monotonous) sounds.

ASMR is fairly common, but if you haven’t experienced this almost euphoric feeling, you’re not alone. It doesn’t happen to everyone.

One study showed that out of 1,002 participants, 813 people (81percent) experience ASMR.

How does ASMR feel?

The feeling of ASMR isn’t exactly easy to describe to someone who’s never experienced it. The most common description is a tingling sensation that starts in your head, travels down your spine, and sometimes travels to other areas of the body, such as the limbs.

For some people, it calms worry or anxiety. For some, it makes them sleepy. It has even been known to temporarily relieve pain for some people.

Some describe it as “almost a euphoric feeling.”

What triggers ASMR?

ASMR is typically triggered by certain sounds or personal attention, and also sometimes visual.

The sounds that trigger ASMR can really be anything, depending on the person. Usually, they are dull, boring, ongoing sounds. It could be whispering, a computer typing, someone using a blow drier, tapping, buzzing, or the sound of rain.

Personal attention seems to be a common trigger as well. If you've ever felt a slight tingle, as well as extremely relaxed while someone was brushing your hair, you have probably had this experience.

Other forms of attention that may cause this sensation are getting your nails done, getting a haircut, massage, or having someone rub your arm. These are just examples, but really anything could trigger this feeling in someone.

How does ASMR work?

Although ASMR has been around since probably the beginning of time, it has only recently been given the name and is newly studied. Most of the information that is known about it is coming from the people that actually experience this sensation.

There are, however, a few hypotheses on the physiological changes happening during ASMR.

Feelings of relaxation, comfort, and feeling like you want to sleep may be due to certain chemicals being released in your brain when you sense your "trigger."

Endorphins

Endorphins are chemicals secreted in the brain and nervous system. These chemicals help to reduce pain and stress. They may be the cause of the "euphoric" feeling that some people experience with ASMR.

Oxytocin

Oxytocin is sometimes known as the “love hormone” and is secreted when people bond, like when giving someone a hug. When it’s secreted, it’s responsible for promoting feelings of love, bonding, and wellbeing. This may contribute to the “tingly” feeling described with ASMR.

Serotonin

When serotonin is released, it is known to lower stress, aid in relaxation, and also induce sleep.

Dopamine

Dopamine is a chemical that’s important for motivation, reward, memory, and attention. It also has been known to sometimes encourage addiction. This may also be true in ASMR as well, since it may keep you wanting to experience this sensation repeatedly.

As mentioned, these are just hypotheses on how ASMR effects the brain physiologically.

Since knowledge of ASMR is fairly new, it is only beginning to be studied.

One study was done to determine if ASMR showed differences in physiology after watching ASMR videos. The study was done using two groups, one group of people that experience ASMR, and a non-ASMR group.

The study found that during the ASMR videos, the ASMR group showed significant changes in the reduction of heart rate and increases in the electrical conductance of the skin.

ASMR subjects also reported an increase in calmness after watching the videos, but no changes in excitement, stress, or sexual arousal.

ASMR and sleep

Since ASMR causes feelings of calmness and sleepiness, it has actually been known to help people sleep, even in people with occasional insomnia.

One study done in 2015 with a total of 475 participants showed that 98 percent of this group sought out ASMR to help them relax. Also, 82 percent use it to help them sleep, and 70 percent use it to deal with stress.

Many of the participants in this study added additional comments stating they use ASMR for issues that other interventions, including medical interventions, failed to help with.

ASMR Videos, Sounds and Triggers

For the people that experience ASMR and want to use it to cope with anxiety or help them sleep, ASMR videos and sounds are available all over the internet.

These ASMR videos and sounds are everywhere and YouTube has thousands of them, so you can most likely find one that triggers this feeling.

Typing in “ASMR” will bring up videos of someone whispering, a shower running, fan blowing, hair driers, eating sounds, and even a mom removing lice. Most of these videos are several hours long so you can use them to get sleepy, to drift into sleep, and stay asleep.

You can even search for specific sounds you want to hear. Typing “ASMR fan” in the YouTube search bar brings up what seems like thousands of long, dull, but popular videos of a fan running, many with millions of views.

Whatever it is that will trigger you, you can probably find it out there.

Although studies are still being done on ASMR, one thing we do know is that there are benefits from it, emotionally and physiologically. This may be something to try to help you feel calm, relax, and get some sleep.