

HEALTHY HABITS FOR SLEEP & REST

MODULE 2 • BALANCED LIFE • WHOLE-PERSON PROGRAM



HEALTHY HABITS FOR SLEEP AND REST

From schedules and seasons to different phases of life, we all thrive on cycles and rhythms. Your heartbeat is a wonderful reminder that you also have natural rhythms within. The actions you take every single day have a profound effect on these internal rhythms and can influence how you feel physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Two important natural rhythms for sleep and rest are circadian and ultradian rhythms, both of which can be supported by daily routines. Circadian rhythms are internal clocks that coincide with the 24-hour cycle as the earth rotates around the sun. A simple example of a circadian rhythm is sleeping at night and being awake during the day. Ultradian rhythms are wake-rest cycles that occur in 80- to 120-minute cycles throughout the day and night. In fact, they are very similar to the sleep cycle and can refresh you like mini-naps would – while you're awake!

Tuning in to your current rhythms that affect sleep and rest allows you to consider and create new rhythms that support your body's natural circadian and ultradian rhythms. This will enhance how rested you feel during the day and how well you sleep at night. This guide will lead you on a journey through your typical day, offering space to reflect on your current daily rhythms and how they could be shifted to promote quality sleep and rest.

YOUR MORNING RHYTHM



The start of a new day is the perfect time to begin honoring your body's natural rhythms. Morning signifies new beginnings and opportunities. Habits that are followed early in the day can help set the stage for whatever lies ahead.

Here are a few ideas for setting a supportive morning rhythm:

- Consider supporting your circadian rhythms by waking up at a similar time each morning and spending time outside shortly thereafter. Sunlight exposure early in the day is associated with earlier melatonin production and falling asleep more easily at night.¹
- Allow yourself space to set a positive intention for the day ahead. For example, choose optimism, reflect on your goals, imagine positive interactions with others, and pencil in opportunities for personal growth. Knowing you've made the most of the day and feeling energized and purposeful throughout it can help you avoid restlessness at night.



Reflect on your current morning routine and consider how it might affect the rest of your day.



Now write down ideas for supporting your body's natural rhythms early in the day. How can you create a rhythm that sets you up for the rest of your day?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

YOUR AFTERNOON RHYTHM



Practicing waking rest – opportunities for leisurely enjoyment and reflection throughout the day – can help you feel refreshed, creative, and more productive. You deserve breaks to reset during your day, and what that looks like will be bio-individual.

Here are a few ideas for setting a supportive afternoon rhythm:

- Consider the type of work you do during the day and how you might balance that work with another dimension of whole-person health. For example, if you have a job that requires significant mental capacity, you might feel best by recharging with a physical activity, such as walking.
- Listen to your body. Pay attention to any signals your body sends you for rest. If you are tired, hungry, thirsty, or irritable, consider taking a break from work and finding a change of scenery for replenishment. Check in with any unmet needs, such as a bathroom break or glass of water. You can try taking a few breaths, going for a short walk, or squeezing in a quick nap.
- Be mindful with caffeine. Replace caffeinated drinks with caffeine-free beverages starting after lunch. Drinking caffeine later in the day can disrupt sleep, as can chocolate, tea, and other caffeine sources, though some people seem to be more sensitive than others.²



Reflect on your current daily activities.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

YOUR EVENING RHYTHM



Winding down with a sleep routine at the end of the day prepares your body and mind for a full night's slumber. Whether reading an enjoyable book, meditating, taking a warm bath, or doing a few calming yoga poses, create space for rituals that help you wind down. Take the time to relax before bed and think about how you might shift your evening rhythm by incorporating habits that help you let go of whatever happened during the day.

Here are a few ideas for setting a supportive evening rhythm:

- Keep a journal by your bed to record gratitudes and set the tone for a positive mind-set. Write down affirmations to repeat before you turn off the light or release a worry or to-do item that's keeping you awake.
- Weave pleasure into your evening routine. Invest in comfortable pajamas, cozy socks or slippers, or a bathrobe. Buy bedding that brings you joy. Enjoy the simple luxury of a nightly face washing and moisturizing ritual. Create space for small habits that help prepare you for sleep in enjoyable ways.



Reflect on your current evening routine and consider how it might be affecting your sleep.



Now write down ideas for supporting your body's natural rhythms before bed.
How can you create a rhythm that is more supportive to sleep?

[illegible]

Here are a few bonus tips to help prepare your body and mind for a full night of restorative rest:

- **Replace alcohol with water several hours before bed.** Alcohol actually negatively affects sleep duration and quality. Studies show that even low alcohol intake can decrease the physiological recovery that sleep normally provides by about 9%.
- **Eat your last meal several hours before bed.** If your body is still digesting, it has less energy for resting. If you're still hungry, have a small snack 30–60 minutes before bed. Aim for a filling, nutritionally balanced snack, with a carbohydrate (e.g., fresh fruit) and a protein or heart-healthy fat (such as nuts).
- **Design a peaceful sleep space.** A serene and comfortable sleep space creates an atmosphere conducive to relaxation.
 - Incorporate calming scents, such as lavender, vanilla, or jasmine, by diffusing an essential oil or using lotion or a pillow spray.
 - Be mindful of room temperature as your body temperature falls in preparation for sleep and rises in preparation for wakefulness.⁵ A bedroom that's too hot or too cold can disrupt sleep; temperatures between 60°F and 67°F are associated with higher-quality sleep.
 - Clear your sleep space of distractions, stimuli, and stressors to help associate your bed with rest.
- **Decrease exposure to artificial light before and during sleep.**
 - Bright overhead lights and blue light exposure can negatively impact sleep quality. Instead, opt for a mellower bedside lamp or Himalayan salt lamp, which emits a soft glow, and try to turn off digital devices at least 30 minutes before bed.
 - We absorb light energy even while we sleep. Light during sleep can disrupt the body's natural circadian rhythms and alter mood, physical strength, digestion, and hormones – including melatonin,⁷ important for sleep regulation. Blackout drapes or shades create total darkness as you sleep, which has been shown to support a healthy weight.

YOUR NEW REST AND SLEEP RHYTHMS



You may find it helpful to try your new sleep and rest-supporting strategies alongside actions you're already doing daily – such as taking a warm bath after brushing your teeth at night or stepping outside into the sunshine each morning while drinking your usual cup of tea. As you continue to practice, you'll begin to supercharge your sleep and rest by creating new rhythms over time.

Just as the seasons naturally change, your daily rhythms and routines will naturally change, too. Continually assess whether your current sleep and rest habits are still supporting you, and return to this guide as often as you need to flow with any changes in routines or rhythms.