

Sleep Like a Baby:

Reclaiming Rest in a Media-Saturated World

As media addicts in our media-driven lives, many of us have forgotten how to sleep like a baby. With late-night binge-watching and endless scrolling, we've messed up our natural rhythms. But it's time to turn the tide and embrace some toddler-inspired bedtime routines that will have us waking up refreshed and ready to tackle the day.

1. Set Your Media Curfew

First things first: let's establish some boundaries with our screens. Example:

- Media Off Time: 9:00 PM. That's your hard stop. No more late-night episodes or doomscrolling.
- Media On Time: 7:00 AM. Give yourself a solid hour of screen-free time in the morning to wake up peacefully.
- Set a timer on your phone for 30 minutes before bedtime. This signals it's time to start your bedtime routine. Be a good parent to yourself and be clear with your inner toddler (or inner teenager) that it is time to wind down and prepare for sleep!
- If sticking to your media curfew is a challenge, team up with another fellow media addict to create a Media Curfew Accountability Partner system. Support each other by checking in at the start and end of your curfew. This will help reinforce your commitment.

2. Create a Relaxing Wind-Down Routine

Now that you have clear parameters around your media start and stop times, let's explore some soothing wind-down routines that will help you transition into sleep mode:

1. Gentle Yoga: Just a few stretches can signal your body that it's time to relax.
2. Journaling: Write down your thoughts or feelings from the day. It's like decluttering your mind.
3. Aromatherapy: Use calming scents like lavender or chamomile to create a peaceful atmosphere.
4. Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tense and release each muscle group, helping your body unwind.
5. Take a Warm Bath: A soothing bath or shower can help relax your muscles and lower your body temperature afterward, making it easier to fall asleep.
6. Read a Book: Spend some quiet time with a book or listen to calming music. This not only helps you unwind but also prepares your mind for rest. A picture book or book with art can also be calming.
7. Do Something Creative: Color or draw in an adult coloring book to relax the mind and focus on something creative. Stop the moment you feel tired. You don't need to complete the picture. You have something fun to look forward to tomorrow evening.
8. Take an Evening Walk: If you can't stop your mind from spinning, a little time in nature can help your thoughts unwind.
9. Drink Comforting Teas: Incorporating these herbal teas into your bedtime routine can create a soothing atmosphere that encourages relaxation and better sleep.
 - Chamomile: Widely known for its calming effects, chamomile tea can help reduce anxiety and improve sleep quality. It contains apigenin, a compound that binds to brain receptors associated with relaxation.
 - Lavender: This fragrant herb is famous for its soothing properties. Drinking lavender tea can help lower anxiety levels and promote a sense of calm, making it easier to drift off to sleep.

- Valerian Root: Often used as a natural remedy for insomnia, valerian root tea may help you fall asleep faster and improve sleep quality by increasing levels of GABA, a calming neurotransmitter in the brain.
- Passionflower: Known for its ability to alleviate anxiety and improve sleep, passionflower tea can be particularly effective in enhancing overall sleep quality.
- Lemon Balm: This herb has mild sedative effects and is often used to reduce stress and anxiety. Drinking lemon balm tea before bed can help you relax and prepare for a restful night's sleep.

*(Always check with your physician to make sure these herbs are okay for you.)

3. Embrace Spirituality for Deeper Rest

Don't forget about nurturing your spiritual side as part of your bedtime routine:

- Meditation: Even just 5 minutes can ground you and help clear your mind.
- Gratitude Practice: Write down three things you're thankful for; it shifts your focus to positivity.
- Prayer or Reflection: Connect with your higher self or a higher power to find peace before sleep. This is a good time to practice your 11th Step daily review, but keep it gentle.
- Visualization: Picture a serene place—like a beach or forest—to help calm your mind.

Transform Your Sleep Environment

Your bedroom should be a sleep sanctuary:

- Blackout Curtains: Make your room as dark as possible—think cozy cave vibes.
- Cool Temperature: Keep it cool; a slightly chilly room is perfect for sleep.
- Comfy Bedding: Invest in soft sheets and pillows that make you want to snuggle in.

- **White Noise Machine:** Drown out distractions with soothing sounds. Or use earplugs.
- **Low Lights for Circadian Rhythms:** Keep all the lights in your house low one hour before bedtime to help your pineal gland secrete melatonin. Melatonin is a hormone produced by the pineal gland that helps regulate the body's circadian rhythms and sleep-wake cycles. Darkness triggers melatonin production, signaling the body to sleep.

Avoid Sleep Saboteurs

To truly sleep like a baby, steer clear of these common pitfalls:

- **Caffeine After 2 PM:** Your afternoon coffee isn't doing you any favors if you want restful sleep.
- **Late-Night Snacking:** Your stomach doesn't need midnight snacks; save those for breakfast!
- **Intense Workouts Before Bed:** Save the heavy lifting for earlier in the day.
- **Limit Naps:** While napping can be tempting, long or late naps can interfere with nighttime sleep. If you must nap, keep it short—around 20 minutes—and do it early in the afternoon. 2:00 PM is a good time when there is a natural dip in your energy.

Can't Sleep? Practice Self-Soothing Techniques

If you find yourself tossing and turning, have a plan in place:

- **Get Out of Bed:** If you can't fall asleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again.
- **Use Aromatherapy:** Scents like lavender can promote relaxation and make it easier to drift off.
- **Practice Deep Breathing:** Focus on your breath. Inhale deeply for a count of four, hold for four, and exhale for four. Repeat this cycle to calm your mind and body.

- Revisit the List: Go back to the “Wind-Down Routine” list above and choose one of these to help you relax.
- Accept Yourself: If you really can’t sleep, just lie in bed with your eyes closed and daydream. Don’t worry about not sleeping, accept the situation and know that you are okay. Sleep will come naturally when you are ready.

Rise and Shine Like a Pro

Finally, embrace the morning after:

- Consistent Wake-Up Time: Try to wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Your body will thank you!
- Morning Light Exposure: Open those curtains and let the sunlight in; it helps reset your internal clock.
- Hydrate First Thing: Drink water instead of reaching for your phone first thing in the morning.

By adopting these toddler-inspired routines and setting healthy boundaries with media, you can reclaim the restful sleep you deserve. Remember, sleeping like a baby isn’t just about quantity; it’s about quality too. So let’s put down our devices, embrace these calming practices, and wake up feeling refreshed and ready to take on the world! Sweet dreams await!