Wellness Wednesday

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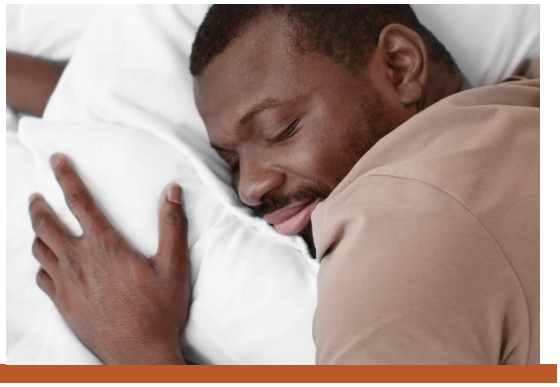
Secrets to Reclaiming Your Sleep: Tips from Restless Sleepers



Waking up in the middle of the night can be a frustrating experience, especially when you find yourself unable to drift back into slumber. Many individuals face this challenge, and while it's a common occurrence, the struggle to return to sleep can feel isolating. Fortunately, there are effective strategies that can help ease the transition back to dreamland. Below, we explore five tried-and-true methods shared by those who have successfully navigated restless nights, along with insights from sleep experts on why these techniques work.

Understanding the Sleep Cycle

Before diving into the tips, it's essential to understand the sleep cycle. Sleep is divided into several stages, including light sleep, deep sleep, and REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. Each stage plays a crucial role in physical and mental restoration. Disruptions during these cycles can lead to feelings of fatigue and irritability. Recognizing the importance of each stage can motivate you to adopt strategies that promote better sleep quality.

The Importance of Sleep Hygiene

Good sleep hygiene is foundational for achieving restful sleep. This includes maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, creating a comfortable sleep environment, and avoiding stimulants before bedtime. By prioritizing these habits, you can enhance your overall sleep quality and reduce the likelihood of waking up in the middle of the night.

1. Engage in Deep Breathing Techniques

One of the most effective methods for calming an overactive mind is practicing deep breathing exercises. This technique involves focusing on your breath to promote relaxation and reduce anxiety.

How to Practice Deep Breathing

- Find a Comfortable Position: Lie down in your bed or sit comfortably.
- Inhale Deeply: Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of four.
- Hold Your Breath: Retain the breath for a count of four.
- Exhale Slowly: Release the breath through your mouth for a count of six.
- Repeat: Continue this cycle for several minutes.

Why It Works

Deep breathing activates the body's relaxation response, helping to lower heart rate and blood pressure. This physiological shift can ease the transition from a state of alertness to one of calmness, making it easier to fall back asleep.

2. Read Calming Literature

For some, reading can serve as a gentle distraction that helps ease the mind. Opting for light, uneventful stories can be particularly effective.

Choosing the Right Material

- Select Low-Stakes Books: Look for classic literature, nature essays, or other calming narratives.
- Avoid Suspenseful Content: Steer clear of thrillers or intense plots that may stimulate your mind.

The Benefits of Reading

Engaging with soothing literature can divert your thoughts from stressors, allowing your mind to relax. This technique can be especially helpful for those who find themselves ruminating during the night.

3. Watch Familiar TV Shows

Another strategy for calming a restless mind is to watch reruns of beloved television shows. Familiarity with the content can create a comforting atmosphere.

Tips for Watching TV Before Sleep

- Choose Gentle Shows: Opt for programs with a slow pace and minimal drama.
- Limit Screen Time: Use a blue-light filter or watch on devices with softer lighting to minimize disruption to your circadian rhythm.

Why This Works

Watching familiar shows can create a predictable environment, reducing mental effort and emotional arousal. This can help ease anxiety and promote relaxation, making it easier to drift back to sleep.

4. Listen to Soothing Frequencies

Many individuals find that listening to specific sound frequencies can aid in relaxation and sleep. Solfeggio frequencies, in particular, are known for their calming effects.

How to Incorporate Sound Therapy

- Find Quality Audio: Look for YouTube videos or apps that feature solfeggio frequencies, typically ranging from 432 Hz to 963 Hz.
- Create a Relaxing Environment: Dim the lights and lie down comfortably while listening.

The Science Behind Sound Therapy

Research suggests that certain frequencies can positively influence mood and brainwave activity. While more studies are needed, many people report that these sounds help them relax and fall asleep more easily.

5. Shift Your Mindset About Sleep

Sometimes, the pressure to fall back asleep can create anxiety, making it even harder to do so. Changing your perspective on sleep can alleviate this stress.

Strategies for a Relaxed Mindset

- Acknowledge Rest: Remind yourself that simply lying in bed and resting is beneficial, even if you're not asleep.
- Practice Mindfulness: Focus on your breathing or visualize a peaceful scene to calm your mind.

Restless nights happen to everyone, but simple strategies can help you sleep better. Try deep breathing, calming books, familiar shows, soothing sounds, and a relaxed mindset. Experiment to find what works best for you. Prioritizing sleep hygiene and understanding your sleep cycle can also boost sleep quality—leading to more restful nights and refreshed mornings.

Slow Cooker Birria Tacos

INGREDIENTS

- 2 ½ lb beef pot roast or chuck roast, trimmed and cut into 2-3 large pieces
- 1 ½ cups yellow onion, chopped, plus more for garnish
- 4 large garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, Mexican oregano if you can find it, it is more citrusy
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons chili powder blend
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon, or 1 small cinnamon stick
- 3 ounces chipotle in adobo, see notes
- 1 cup canned crushed tomatoes, fire roasted
- 3 cups beef broth
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 bay leaves
- 16 corn tortillas
- 2 cups shredded Monterey jack, Oaxaca or queso chihuahua
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro, for serving
- lime wedges, optional for serving
- guajillo, ancho and arbol chiles, optional in place of chipotle for a more traditional birria.

Originating from Jalisco, Mexico, Birria tacos have become a beloved dish across the country. They are celebrated for their rich flavors and comforting textures.

What Are Birria Tacos?

Birria tacos are a unique fusion of tender, slow-cooked meat and crispy tortillas, often served with a flavorful dipping sauce known as consommé. The meat is typically marinated in a blend of spices and herbs, then cooked until it becomes melt-in-your-mouth tender. The tacos are usually garnished with fresh toppings, making them a feast for both the eyes and the palate.

The History of Birria

Birria has deep roots in Mexican culture, dating back to the 16th century. Originally made with goat meat, it was a dish reserved for special occasions. Over time, birria evolved, and different regions began to adapt the recipe to include various meats and cooking methods. Whether from a traditional taqueria, a trendy food truck, or a high-end restaurant, birria tacos offer a sensory experience that combines rich history with modern appeal—a delicious example of how traditional foods can find new life and appreciation across cultural boundaries.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 2 tacos, Calories: 394 kcal, Carbohydrates: 25.5 g, Protein: 42.5 g, Fat: 14.5 g, Saturated Fat: 7 g, Cholesterol: 121.5 mg, Sodium: 1067 mg, Fiber: 5 g, Sugar: 5.5 g



INSTRUCTIONS

How to Make It

- Heat a large skillet over medium heat and spray with cooking spray. Brown the beef on all sides in two batches. Transfer the beef to the slow cooker.
- In a blender, or food processor, blend 1 cup onion, garlic, garlic powder, onion powder, oregano, cumin, chili powder, cinnamon, chipotle in adobo, crushed tomato, beef broth, white vinegar and salt. Pour over beef. Add bay leaves and cook on low heat for 8 hours.
- Shred beef strain the broth. Return beef to slow cooker with ½ cup broth and keep warm. Save remaining broth for dipping tortillas and serving.

To serve:

- Quickly dip tortilla in the consommé (broth) and add to a hot skillet or griddle.
- Add 3 tablespoons of shredded beef and 2 tablespoons shredded cheese to the tortilla with some onion and cilantro. Fold and cook like a quesadilla until browned on each side.
- Serve birria tacos with raw chopped onion and cilantro, plus remaining consommé in a small bowl, for dipping.

https://youaligned.com/yoga/yoga-poses-for-men/

Featured Exercise

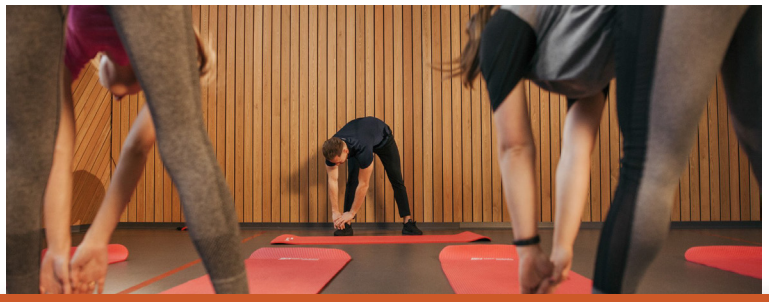
Wide-Legged Standing Forward Fold

HOW TO DO IT:

1. **Position Yourself:** Stand facing the long edge of your yoga mat, spreading your feet wide apart. Adjust the distance between your feet as needed for comfort.
2. **Align Your Feet:** Ensure that your feet are parallel and aligned with each other. Use visual cues, such as the central line on your mat, to assist with this alignment.
3. **Begin the Forward Fold**: Gently tip your pelvis forward, initiating the fold from your hips rather than your waist.
4. Release Your Hands: Allow your hands to drop toward the floor. If you cannot reach the ground, consider using blocks for support.
5. **Maintain Alignment:** As you fold, be mindful of your buttocks. Keep them aligned over your heels to prevent any strain on your lower back.
6. **Let Your Head Hang:** Once you reach your fullest expression of the pose, allow your head to hang heavy. If your head easily touches the floor, consider bringing your feet slightly closer together.

THE BENEFITS:

- Enhanced Flexibility: This pose effectively stretches the hamstrings, calves, and glutes, promoting greater flexibility in the lower body.
- Spinal Elongation: The forward fold helps to lengthen the spine, alleviating tension in the back muscles and promoting better posture.
- Strengthening Support Muscles: Practicing this pose strengthens the muscles surrounding the ankles, contributing to improved stability and balance.



Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

Meet Ulliance Senior Wellness Account Manager