

# Yoga for Sleep

*(It is with huge apologies that I do not know who to credit the pictures to in this...if you are the originator do get in touch so I can make amends.)*

This is an idea of what you can do for yourself if you struggle to get to sleep at night. Apart from this 'physical' side of yoga you may also want to consider some or all of the following, which I have found helpful for myself at times when my sleep switch won't turn on!

- Turn off the computer/TV by 9pm
- Head for bed by 10pm
- Avoid milky drinks before bed...have a light herbal one if you need anything at all after 8pm.
- Dinner by 7pm (better by 6pm) so the digestive system has plenty of time to do its work...and not a heavy dinner...no snacking!
- Read or listen to music before bed...or have a bath
- Try and develop a self care routine before bed that becomes a habit...so it is nurturing and helps you to relax.
- A Yoga Nidra practice...you will find some on my website in the relaxation section.



## 1. Short Meditation

Get ready for bed. Put your pyjamas on! Get comfortable. Sit in a cross-legged seated position, or legs in front, and lean back slightly onto your pillows or headboard. Close your eyes and rest your hands on your thighs. Stay here and just breathe for a few minutes. This doesn't have to be a heavy and intense meditation but just a short break, allowing yourself to do nothing but connect to the breath.



## 2. Seated Twist

Still in your cross-legged seated position, or legs in front, inhale and sit up tall. Then exhale as you twist to the right. Hold for a few deep breaths. Inhale as you return to centre. Then exhale as you twist to the left. Keep the shoulders releasing; allow softness around the waist.



## 3. Seated Forward Bend, Pt 1

Slowly extend your legs out in front of you, keeping your knees slightly bent. Inhale and sit up tall. Then exhale and reach for your feet. Bend your knees as much as necessary to keep your back flat...holding your toes. This pose is a hamstring stretch, but don't make it deep and intense; your ultimate goal is gentle relaxation and sleep. But it helps to release tension.

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## 4. Seated Forward Bend, Pt 2

Stay in the same seated position with your legs extended in front of you. This time allow the head and shoulders to gently release over your legs. Stay folded forward for a few deep breaths, feeling the opening along your

spine.



## 5. Knees-to-Chest Pose, Pt 1

Slowly roll down to lie on your back and rest your head on your pillow. Hug one knee into your chest, holding your shin to pull it closer to you. Stay here for a few deep breaths. This lengthens your extended leg and loosens up your hip. Switch legs and repeat.



## 6. Knees-to-Chest Pose, Pt 2

Hug both knees into your chest this time and rock slowly side to side on your back, moving with your breath. Let your whole back release and relax into the bed. Release the shoulders and elbows.



## 7. Reclining Big-Toe Hold

Inhale and extend right leg straight up to the ceiling, taking hold wherever you can comfortably reach (behind your knee, closer to your ankle, or your big toe if you're very flexible!). Exhale and keep your leg straight as you slowly bring it toward your head. Move it slightly closer with each exhale,

working the stretch very gently for a few slow, deep breaths. Switch sides. Keep these stretches very gentle for now—almost as if you are doing them halfway.



## 8. Half Happy Baby

Hug your left knee into your chest again. Flex your left foot so the sole faces the ceiling. Grab hold of the outside edge of your foot with your left hand and bring your knee toward your armpit. Stay here for a few slow, deep breaths. Switch sides and repeat. (this one may be a toughie so

don't do if it makes the mind work too much)



## 9. Reclining Twist, Pt 1

Inhale and hug your right knee back into your chest. Exhale and twist your leg across your body to the left. Turn your head to the right and extend your arms straight out to the sides. You can rest your left hand on your

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right knee. Stay here for a few slow, deep breaths. **Before switching sides, move on to the next pose.** Keep the shoulders on the bed.



## 10. Reclining Twist, Part 2

Still in your twist, extend your right leg straight and reach through your foot diagonally to the left. At the same time reach with your right arm, diagonally to the right. Look toward your hand as you take a few deep breaths here.

Switch sides and repeat 9 on your left, and this one.



## 11. Corpse Pose

Lie down flat on your back. Extend both legs and both arms out straight. Let your ankles roll open to the sides and your palms face up. Rest here for a little while. Feel free to drift off if you sleep on your back.

No guarantees this will help you but I hope it does. These postures are just suggestions...you can do any variations you feel comfortable with...but try not to make them energetic...you don't want to wake yourself up even more. Really use the exhale to help you release into the posture and let go of the day.

Let me know how you get on.