

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

TODAY'S TIPS ABOUT SLEEP

Over the past several weeks you have been asked to make almost daily adjustments in your lives, including social distancing and changes in pursuing your classes, research, and clerkships. Some changes may be temporary and others more long-lasting, but all are stressful, as the rhythm of your daily lives have been disrupted. Establishing a daily routine supports one's sense of well-being and can help you more effectively manage the stress you are experiencing.

TODAY'S WELLNESS WEDNESDAY TIPS

focus on facilitating good sleep, which plays a key role in establishing a consistent routine and in managing stress. Tips include:

- Get up at the same time every day. It stabilizes your body clock.
- Avoid naps if possible, especially later in the day. If necessary, limit to 30 minutes.
- Avoid bright lights in the evening. Dim the lights, including screen lights.
- Avoid blue light (screens) 30-60 minutes before bed.
- Stick to a consistent bedtime.
- Develop a bedtime routine.
- Allow at least 30-60 minutes to wind down before bed.
- Take a warm bath or shower 30 - 60 minutes before bed.
- Have a cool, dark, quiet sleep environment.
- If you aren't asleep in 20 minutes, do something quiet elsewhere until sleepy.
- Avoid caffeine 4-6 hours before bed (some people need a much longer time).
- Regular exercise, preferably earlier in the day.
- Write down your worries in a journal earlier in the day to clear your mind. Do this daily.
- Stop looking at your clock at night. It increases stress.

REFRESH is a program offered through UI Student Health and Wellness that can be downloaded and help you make cognitive and behavioral changes to improve sleep:

<https://studentwellness.uiowa.edu/programs/refresh/>

RELAXATION EXERCISES can help if you are having difficulty falling asleep. There are a variety of relaxation exercises, including breathing techniques, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic relaxation techniques, and guided imagery. These techniques can also be helpful for stress and anxiety.

Try to practice these exercises at least once before going to bed so that you know what to expect. Once you understand the exercise, you may choose to do it without using your device. Your mind will probably wander. That's normal - just redirect your thoughts to the exercise. Some You Tube sites to check out (there are a ton out there if you don't like any of these):

Relaxation Breathing Techniques: Easy but can be very effective:

"15 Minute Deep Breathing" City of Hope. January 16, 2015. This exercise begins with breathing, moves to an autogenic exercise and ends with guided imagery visualization:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F28MGLlpP90>

"Mindful Breathing Meditation (5 Minutes). September 28, 2017. She talks about sitting but you can easily use while lying in bed:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmFUDkj1Aq0>

Progressive Muscle Relaxation: These exercises focus on tensing and relaxing groups of muscles to release physical tension and help your body relax. They also can help by focusing your attention away from thoughts that may be keeping you awake.

"Progressive Muscle Relaxation Done Correctly" by Ray Barrett of Life's Canvass. May 2013:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eHqfc8qQs0>

" Progressive Muscle Relaxation (female voice)" Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospital. March 2014 (There is also a version with a male voice.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSgpUUjReSQ>

"How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation" Therapist Aid:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nZEdqcGVzo>

Autogenic Relaxation: These exercises focus on relaxing your body with thoughts of heaviness and/or warmth. They are less physically active than the progressive muscle exercises. Some include imagery:

"Autogenic Relaxation" by Guernsey Health and Social Care. March 2, 2015. This one is "no frills" – no music in the background and no added visualization:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCXUOX28Rt8>

"A Mini Autogenic Relaxation for Stress and Anxiety". January 17, 2015. This one includes a beach visualization about warmth of the sand:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyS3WIAPF6o>

"Autogenic Training 1: Total Relaxation. Your First Step into Deep Relaxation." The narrator has a very deep voice:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_sdaDwa2Ek

Watch for more weekly Wellness Wednesday tips.

Feel free to contact the MSCC for questions or concerns.
Stay healthy!

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