**Sleep for Success and Well-Being**

*By Andrea Lieberstein, MPH, RDN, RYT*

*Bestselling author of ‘Well Nourished: Mindful Practices to Heal Your Relationship to Food, Feed Your Whole Self and End Overeating’, Speaker, Trainer, Mindfulness and Mindful Eating Coach*

**A version of this article appeared in eMindfulLife**

If you pay attention to health news you’ll know that at least 7-8 hours of sleep a night make a huge difference in daily sense of well-being, mood, creativity and problem-solving abilities. It’s clearer than ever how much it can also impact your overall health and longevity.

But it’s often the difference that you notice in your own life, body and sense of well-being that can be the greatest motivator to get enough sleep on regular basis.  If you’re anything like me, sometimes at the end of a long day, going on the screen can be very seductive. Time can easily slip away, reading or watching one more thing. We might end up watching one extra episode of our favorite TV show, or browsing longer than planned on the web.  Using mindful awareness to observe our habits, assess how they contribute or detract from our overall well-being, can be the first step to making lasting changes. In this way, mindfulness can be very helpful to get the amount and quality of sleep that we need.

Mindfulness includes the important ability to pause, in our busy lives, get out of autopilot, and notice what is truly transpiring in this moment and during our day. It’s about meeting ourselves and each moment with an attitude of kindness and nonjudgment. This pausing helps us make choices with greater clarity and ease. The science of sleep hygiene provides a well established list of tips and practices to help improve our quality and length of sleep. We can use mindfulness to assess our sleep habits and choose to make the changes that can make a difference. I have specially selected a few tips from this well researched body of work that can make a big difference. Following these simple steps can help improve your sleep habits.

**Time Spent Before Bed Makes a Difference;** Be mindful of how you’d like to spend your evenings. How you spend it can determine the quality of your sleep and how easily you fall asleep. The time after work or any full busy day is particularly impactful. You may still have responsibilities such as preparing a family dinner and getting the kids to bed but there is usually some extra time between your last responsibility and bed. If there isn’t, see what you can do to create some.

**Choose relaxing activities at least one hour before bedtime.** Wind down any use of internet, watching the news, any media that might increase adrenalin or stress. I happen to love learning about archaeology and ancient history so sometimes I will read about some of the latest discoveries or watch interesting or inspiring educational video before bed. What is interesting or inspires you?

**Create relaxing bedtime rituals**. Take a hot bath or shower with essential oils or put a diffuser on. Put soft lighting on, soothing music, do some gentle stretching or practice a mindful meditation or body scan.  If you like to read before bed, read content that won’t overstimulate your system and make it hard to fall asleep. Content that is fun, entertaining, or inspiring provides a good “note” to go to sleep on.

**Set a Clear Bedtime.** Pick a regular bedtime that will give you the hours of sleep that you need, depending upon when you need to wake up. Then stick with it. You can work backwards from your bedtime and incorporate these other tips to help insure an easier time falling asleep. If you are a frequent night waker, practicing a body scan or mindfulness meditation is one way to help you fall back to sleep again.

**Morning Light.** When you first wake up, open your windows, let the light shine in and perhaps take a moment to appreciate and be grateful for at least three things in your life. Exposing yourself to morning light first thing, helps set your sleep clock to wake and fall asleep on a more regular schedule.

Learn more about nourishing sleep and self-care, buy the book ‘Well Nourished’ or schedule a complimentary session with Andrea. Learn about our health professional trainings.

Visit www.yourwellnourishedlife.com