

# SESSION 5: SLEEP STRATEGIES AND SELF CARE

## Review

- Was it difficult to replace your thought?
- Once you did, did you believe the new thought?
- Did you behave or respond differently to the new thought than you did to the old thought?

### AGENDA

#### In today's session, we will:

- 1** Review your practice since our last session
- 2** Learn strategies to manage your sleep routine
- 3** Build self-care skills
- 4** Learn a relaxation technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Sleep Strategies

Worries can lead to racing thoughts and sleepless nights. Not getting enough sleep is the beginning of many more problems such as being at greater risk of getting sick, forgetfulness, or irritability. There are many ways to improve your sleep habits; however, if these are not helpful for you, it may be important to speak with your doctor to rule out other complicating factors or medical conditions. When trying these strategies to help with your sleep, stick with it for 2-3 weeks to see a change in your sleep.

## Increasing control and coping with sleep difficulties:

**1. Relaxation.** Stress greatly interferes with our ability to fall asleep, stay asleep, and get quality sleep. Relaxation can help us manage and cope with stress so that it interferes less with sleep. Try **diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation (session 5), or a short breathing exercise.** Take a few moments to close your eyes and focus on your breath. The more you practice, the better you will be at calming your body and releasing tension. Try relaxation during the day when you are not tired, and try to use relaxation before bed as part of your nighttime routine.



**2. Adaptive thinking and cognitive reframing.** How we think about sleep affects how we feel and whether we can sleep. For example, a person who worries all day that they will not be able to sleep tonight (thoughts) becomes anxious as the sun goes down and the night approaches (feelings). By the time their head hits the pillow, they have butterflies in their stomach and their heart is racing (physical sensations). Their awareness of these nerves perpetuates the worry about not being able to sleep, and soon they are also worried about how they will be able to function the next day on little sleep (more thoughts and feelings around nervousness and worry). As a result, they are unable to sleep, and they lay awake checking their email and reading the news on the iPad (behaviors), which makes it less likely for sleep to occur. Try replacing unhelpful thoughts about sleep with helpful, accurate alternative thoughts.

## Alternative thoughts about sleep:

*e.g., Worrying about my sleep now won't help and will only make me more on edge. I will focus on what I need to accomplish now, start my wind down routine, and do a short relaxation before bed.*

---

---

---

**3. Sleep hygiene.** Establishing sleep hygiene, or helpful sleep behaviors, is an important part of securing a good night's sleep. Establish a wind-down routine (see below). Don't eat or drink too much too close in time to bed time and avoid caffeine as of the late afternoon. Create a dark, quiet, cool environment to sleep in, and use a noise machine or other ambient noise to drown out sounds that might wake you up. Establish times that you will go to bed (when you are tired) and when you will wake up. Stick to this routine each day. Limit naps during the day to ensure that you are tired at night when it is time to go to sleep.

**4. Modify sleep cues.** We associate cues in our environment with thoughts and feelings. For example, the site of a fireplace may elicit pleasant feelings and thoughts of being cozy, warmth, and thoughts of hot chocolate or s'mores. Alternatively, for others, the site of a fireplace may create unpleasant feelings and thoughts of a bitter winter, coldness, shoveling, and storms. Similarly, our bedroom and bed elicit thoughts and feelings that influence whether we feel relaxed and will be able to sleep. For example, doing too many things in bed (eating, watching TV, reading, arguing with our spouse) in bed tends to lead to associations of the bed with an awake state. Similarly, tossing and turning in bed trying to get back to sleep leads to an association of the bed with feelings of irritability and frustration. Experts say that the bed should be for sleep and intimacy only and that other activities should take place elsewhere.

**5. Change your environment.** If you can't fall asleep after 15-20 minutes, get up out of bed and sit in a chair or go to a different room. The reason this is helpful relates back to number 4; we associate the bed with an awake state and the frustration of not being able to get back to sleep. After you have gone to another room, do not watch the clock. During this time, you can do quiet, sedentary activities (e.g., reading, watching TV that is not too stimulating). Return to bed when you are sleepy and try not to fall asleep elsewhere. Resist the temptation to sleep in or take naps during the day to make up for lost sleep, as this will only shift your sleep pattern. Instead, continue to get out of bed at your regular morning time. The more you stick with the routine, the more your body will learn to be tired at your bedtime and alert at your waking time.



**6. Establish a wind down routine.** Establish a routine at night to help you wind down. For example, light a candle, play music, take a shower, turn the lights down. Avoid eating or drinking too close to bedtime and avoid the temptation to bring your phone or iPad to bed with you.

**7. Physical activity.** Regular exercise is helpful for improving sleep. Plan times to go for a walk, or other physical activity that you enjoy doing. You don't necessarily need to do strenuous, monotonous exercise to benefit from physical activity. Activity can include yoga, hiking, Zumba, biking, swimming, walking, Tai Chi Chuan, or other activity that gets your heart rate up. Start slow and work your way up. However, do not exercise within 2 hours of your bedtime.

## Self-Care Strategies

It is normal to be tempted to put aside your own needs and put the needs of the person you are caring for first. While this may be necessary sometimes, if you do it all the time, you might start to neglect your own basic needs and run out of energy. It is difficult to prioritize your own self-care while caring for someone else, but here we review some simple strategies to try.

Remember these basic self-care strategies:

- **Support:** Ask and seek support from other family members and/or friends.
- **Physical activity:** Incorporate enjoyable physical activity or exercise.
- **Eating:** Maintain a nutritious, healthy diet. Seek a referral to a nutritionist for more information.
- **Spirituality:** Engage in spiritual support (religious activity, prayer, journaling, or meditation).
- **Recreation:** Spend recreational time for yourself, enjoy social time with friends and other people.
- **Sleep:** Protect time for sleep and optimize your sleep environment. Re-visit content from session 5 to improve your sleep habits
- **Mental Health:** Ask for help from a trained mental health professional.
- **Respite Care Options:** Respite care is short-term temporary relief for those caring for family members who might otherwise need professional care and attention. Some websites that can help coordinate respite care are:
  - <https://www.caringbridge.org/>
  - <http://lotsahelpinghands.com/>

\*\*\*

## Exercise

To choose some activities to build in to your schedule, think of things you used to love to do and how you may be able to do them today, but perhaps differently.

**Things I used to love to do:**

---

---

**Ways I could still do these activities, but I might have to do them a little bit differently (*be creative*):**

---

---

**Make a plan for that activity! This week I will:**

---

---

\*\*\*

## Here are some ideas:

Take a bath	Read a book	Bake or cook
Write (poetry, journal, diary, doodle)	Resolve the conflict	Self-care and grooming (e.g., pedicure)
Delegate responsibilities	Sing	Pray
Listen to music	Cry	Color or paint
Dance	Clean	Shop
Physical exercise	Aromatherapy	Restore antiques, furniture, etc.
Massage therapy	Go to a party	Play a board game
Get information	Eat a snack	Play a musical instrument
Acupuncture	Do a favor for someone	Learn to do something new
Yoga	Go to a museum	Make a charitable donation
Go out for a meal	Go to a play, musical, or concert	Explore (hike, walk around town)
Talk to friends	Meditation	Walk barefoot
Bike ride	Volunteer your time	Sing
Seek advice	Be intimate with someone	Solve a puzzle, crossword, etc.
Take a walk	Cook a meal	Visit old friends
Take a drive	Compliment someone	Stay organized/re-organize
Laugh	Bird-watch	Write a letter or card
Watch a favorite TV show or movie	Go camping or on a nature walk	Other:

Schedule one activity for each day of the week, plan in advance, and place a check mark in the box afterwards.

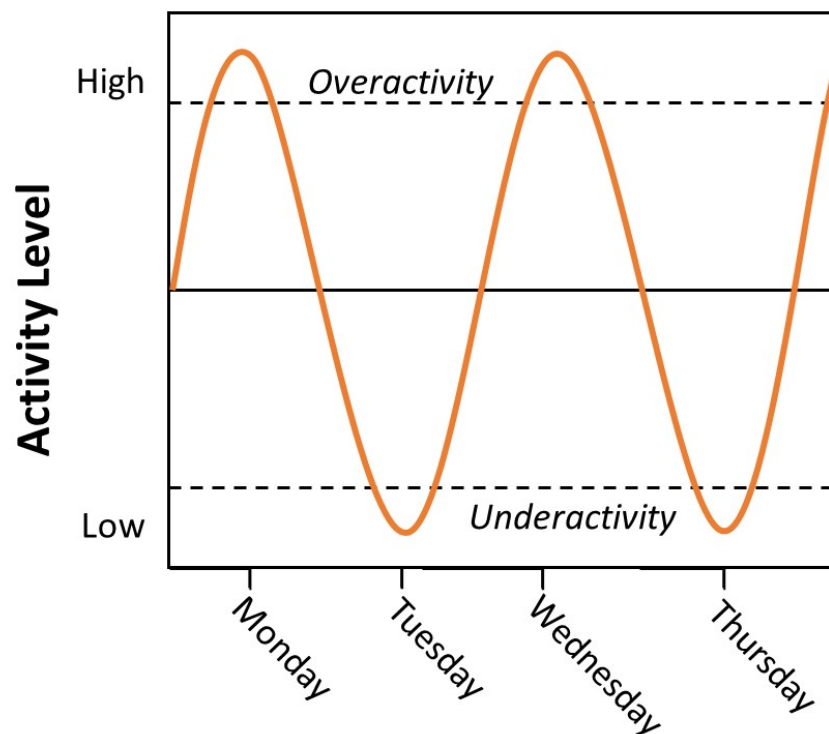
	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
<b>Planned activity</b>							
<b>Check when done</b>							

---



## Activity Pacing and Behavioral Modification

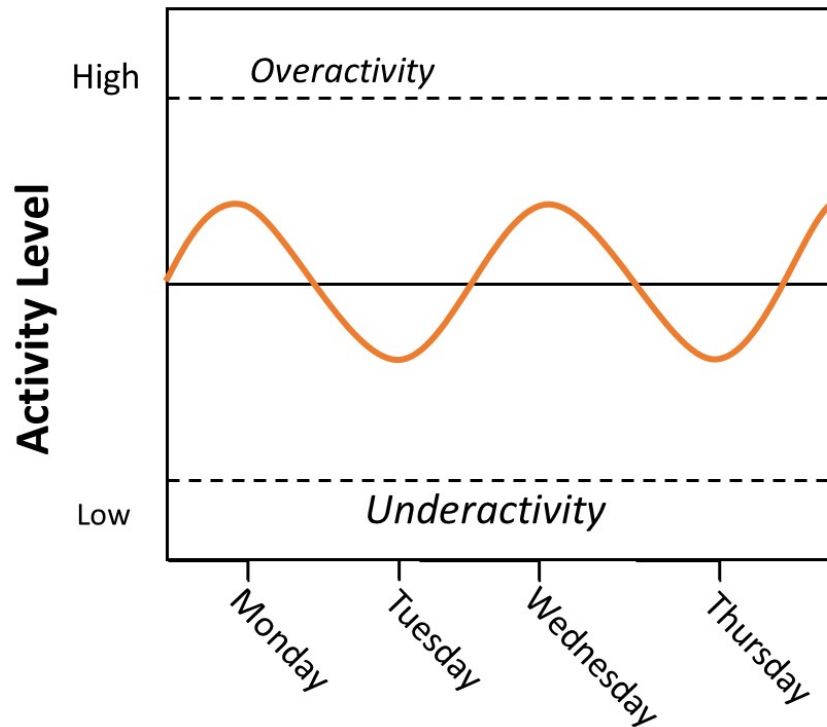
Some of the stress you experience may result in pain or fatigue. When we are fatigued, in pain, or experiencing other symptoms, we may have good days and bad days. On the good days, we may want to get everything accomplished (clean the whole house) and do everything (play with our kids all day), because we feel good! While this is reasonable, the risk is that we do too much, and the next day (or days) we are completely wiped out and exhausted because we overdid it. If we were to graph our activity levels, it would look like this:



Another consequence is that the periods of low activity also bring along low mood, sadness, depression, or irritability.

To avoid periods of inactivity and low mood, set a realistic goal and pace yourself, especially on your good days. Set a time-based goal (e.g., I will work on this for 30 minutes), and stick to it, even if you still feel energized or pain-free and think you can keep going. In this way, you are setting a “time-based” goal instead of a “feeling-based” goal, and less likely to overdo it. Your body will thank you the next day, when you might feel good enough to finish the task or engage in another enjoyable activity! The goal is to conserve some energy, reduce symptoms, and keep activity levels steady, rather than

have one day of productivity or fun, followed by many days of inactivity, fatigue, pain, and low mood.



Is there something that used to bring you joy and pleasure that you haven't been doing lately? It is important to take care of yourself during this time. Block out some time in your calendar to do an activity that...

- involves other people such as having lunch with a friend
- gives you a sense of accomplishment like exercising or finishing a project
- makes you feel good or relaxed, like watching a funny movie or taking a walk

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation, or PMR, is another type of active relaxation exercise that can be helpful, especially in moments when you feel stressed or angry. During this relaxation, we will focus on 4 muscle groups, purposefully tensing the muscle, and then releasing and relaxing the muscle. PMR is helpful for two reasons:

1. The active process of tensing the muscle creates a momentum when we release the tension (like a pendulum). For the state of tension we are in, we create an equal state of relaxation, therefore achieving a more relaxed state than we would if we shifted from a resting state to a relaxed state.
2. By creating tension and following it with relaxation, we increase our awareness of the contrast between these two states. Highlighting this difference makes us more aware of when we are tense, so we are more likely to recognize when we are holding tension throughout the day and be aware of a method for quickly letting go of that tension.

The four muscle groups are:

**Hands, forearms, and biceps:**  
hold arms at 45-degree angle  
and make fists

**Face and neck:** raise eyebrows,  
squint eyes, wrinkle nose, bite  
down lightly, pull back corners of  
mouth, and pull head slightly  
down to chin

**Chest, shoulders, upper back,  
abdomen:** take a deep breath,  
hold it in, pull back the shoulders

**Thighs, calves, feet:** Lift your feet  
off the floor, flex slightly, and  
turn toes inward

Tips:

- Get in a comfortable position, lying or sitting.
- The goal is to tense, but not so hard that you cause pain or cramping.
- When you relax, immediately relax your muscles, instead of slowly letting go
- Like the other active relaxation exercises, this takes practice. The more you practice, the easier it will become to relax.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

*Close your eyes and start to bring awareness to your breath, as you inhale...and exhale...*

*Begin to bring your awareness to the muscles in your hands, forearms, and biceps. Hold your arms out in front of you with your elbow bent to make an L shape, make a fist, and tense the muscles NOW. Squeeze the muscles in your arm...continue to breathe as you notice the tension building in these muscles...hold...tighten, 3...2...1...and RELAX...letting all the tension go...focusing on these muscles as they just relax completely. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Noticing what it feels like as you let all the tension go...and relaxation flows into these muscles. Enjoy this feeling of relaxation.*

*Now, shift the focus to the muscles of your face and neck. Raise your eyebrows, scrunch your nose, pull back the corners of your mouth, gently bite down, slightly move the chin towards your throat, and tense the muscles NOW. Squeeze the muscles in your face, neck, and throat...continue to breathe as you notice the tension building in these muscles...hold...tighten, 3...2...1...and RELAX...letting all the tension go...focusing on these muscles as they just relax completely. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Noticing what it feels like as you let all the tension go...and relaxation flows into these muscles. Enjoy this feeling of relaxation.*

*Begin to bring awareness to the muscles of your chest, shoulders, and back. Gently pull your shoulder up to touch your ears and at the same time pull your shoulder blades back behind you, puff out your chest, and slightly arch your back (use caution), and tense your muscles NOW. Squeeze the muscles in your shoulders, chest, and back...continue to breathe as you notice the tension building in these muscles...hold...tighten, 3...2...1...and RELAX...letting all the tension go...focusing on these muscles as they just relax completely. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Noticing what it feels like as you let all the tension go...and relaxation flows into these muscles.*

*Enjoy this feeling of relaxation.*

*Now, shift the focus to the muscles of your thighs, calves, and feet. Gently lift your leg slightly off the ground, flex your feet, point your toes inward towards each other and tense your muscles NOW. Squeeze the muscles in your thighs, calves, and feet...continue to breathe as you notice the tension building in these muscles...hold...tighten, 3...2...1...and RELAX...letting all the tension go...focusing on these muscles as they just relax completely. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Noticing what it feels like as you let all the tension go...and relaxation flows into these muscles. Enjoy this feeling of relaxation.*

*As we come to the end of this relaxation, take a moment to wiggle your toes and fingers, tilt your head side to side, and when you are ready, take a deep breath, and open your eyes.*

## Home Practice

1. Choose a sleep or self-care strategy to implement this week and stick with it for 2-3 weeks. Continue to practice replacing negative thoughts with more accurate ones.



2. Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation or Diaphragmatic Breathing 5-10 minutes per day.

## Notes

You can use this “Notes” section to jot down thoughts about the session or the practice exercise. You may also use this space to write down questions to ask the healthcare team, reminders to yourself, or questions for your next session with us.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

