Sufficient sleep heals our bodies and minds, but for many reasons sleep doesn’t always come easily. Mindfulness practices and habits can help us fall asleep and stay asleep. Try these 5 steps to help you get off to sleep.

 

1. **Dim the lights 1 hour before bedtime**. Start winding down the brain and body by dimming the lights. Participate in relaxing activities outside the bedroom that pass the time quietly, like reading or knitting.
2. **Avoid looking at anything with a screen**. Put away your tablet, phone, computer, and TV for the night—the light can keep you awake and alert.
3. **Ten minutes before bedtime, begin a focused mindfulness exercise**. Sit in a comfortable chair in the same dimly lit room. Imagine the outline of your body and slowly trace it in your head. Keep in mind the amount of pressure you’re feeling against the chair or the ground and be mindful of where there’s more pressure and where there’s less. Start with your head. Is it touching the back of the chair? How heavy does it feel against the chair, wall, or just the air? Then slowly move down to your ear, then shoulder, arm, and leg. Work down to your feet and then back up the other side of your body. Take about five minutes for this exercise.
4. **If your mind begins to wander, notice that it wandered and get back on track**. Try to avoid judging yourself—your mind will sometimes wander; the trick is getting it back on track.
5. **Get in bed and focus on your breath**. If you are unable to fall asleep, get up, sit in the comfortable chair again and repeat the exercise. Don’t get back into bed until you’re sleepy—and don’t sleep in the chair.