

## Yoga Week 19: Bedtime Yoga Workshop

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### **The Role of Mindful Movement Before Bed = Increased Sleep = Positive Day!**

You may think of life as a whole pie. You separate big pieces for more important things such as family, friends, exercise, education, self-love, socializing and more...

Think to yourself, how much do you prioritize sleep? How big is the piece of pie for the category of sleeping?

If it is not a "big piece", you may find yourself pushing through days that are long, hard, and exhausting, when you deserve to feel energized and awake

### **Do you ever feel like you don't get enough sleep?**

Sleep deprivation can affect different parts of our brain, including our hippocampus, which is responsible for memory retrieval

Our cognitive function, verbal memory, and our vital energy also declines when we are tired and don't get a good night's sleep

### **Important Sleep Cycles**

NREM (non-rapid eye movement) & REM (rapid eye movement) sleep an important part of your sleep cycle because it stimulates the areas of your brain that are essential in learning and making or retaining memories

Studies have shown that yoga practitioners have increased NREM (non-rapid eye movement) & REM (rapid eye movement) sleep during the night

Increased NREM & REM have also shown a role in reducing anxiety

### **Benefits of Yoga Before Bed**

Yoga before bed can calm & strengthen your respiratory system, which opens your airway to breathe, resulting in less sleep disturbances

Yoga and good sleep also correlate with improved overall mood, alertness, concentration, motivation, attention span, and reduced heart rate

Yoga also helps increase the body's natural level of melatonin, which is a neurotransmitter in the body used to help with sleep

Yoga also helps calm the nervous system & direct your attention to the present moment as well as recognizing emotions before bed

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### Yoga Poses to Try Before Bed

Try one-try all! Do what feels best for you and leave the rest! Stay in these poses for at least 10 seconds or stay a little longer. Maybe choose half of the poses and hold them for 3-5 minutes each. Drink lots of water and stay mindful during the poses

First start by sitting in a butterfly or comfortable seated position

Place one hand over your heart & the other over your belly

Begin to center yourself for your practice

Start by taking some slow deep breaths (preferably 4 counts per inhale & exhale)

Maybe start to imagine the colors of the rainbow as you go through each inhale & exhale

### WIDE LEGGED FORWARD FOLD

- In a standing position, take a wide step outward with toes pointing out diagonal at an angle
- Arms can come out to the sides, making a T with your body, start to hinge forward bringing your arms to the ground, eventually bringing the hands to the feet
- Keep your head downward, look through your legs
- This is an inversion pose because the head is below heart
- This pose allows fresh oxygenated blood to flow to the brain
- This pose allows your neck to rest, improving headaches and neck pain

### STANDING FORWARD FOLD

- Standing hip width distance apart feet facing forward, bring arms up overhead and reach to the sky, exhale, and forward fold, bringing arms down to the ground
- This pose helps relieve stress by calming the brain and stimulating certain organs in the body including the liver, the kidney, and the hips (which stores a lot of emotional traumas)
- This pose is about becoming more aligned, grab each elbow, it's not about touching toes or the ground! IF you can't reach the ground, put your hand

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### HEAD TO KNEE

- Sit on the floor with one leg straight out in front of you, the other foot will rest against the sole of the inner thigh of the leg that's out in front of you
- Sit up tall, align your hips, bring your hands to the outside of the knee that's out in front of you. Start to walk your fingers out in front of you and bend your body forward. Repeat on the other side...
- This pose counters prolonged sitting
- This pose is good to do right before bed to help with recovery of large muscles in the legs
- This pose brings calmness to the mind, reducing anxiety, relieves low back pain, tightness and stretches ENTIRE back

### SEATED TWIST

- Sitting with legs crossed, bring one hand to the outside of the opposite knee, with the other arm, bring it behind your back and turn your head to the back. Take a big deep breath and twist a little deeper, repeat on the other side...
- This pose provides a deep cleansing stretch to the spine and neck
- This pose stimulates the digestive track because it is twisting the organs

### RECLINING BUTTERFLY WITH ARMS OVER YOUR HEAD

- Lie down on your back, keeping the soles of the feet together, let your knees fall open to create a diamond shape, bring arms above head, holding opposite elbows
- This pose is a restorative pose (meaning stress reducing)
- This pose is also a hip opener (good for releasing emotions before bed)

### LEGS UP THE WALL

- Lying on your back, bring your legs up over your head, let legs relax onto a wall, bed, or in the air
- If you've had a long day, this is the pose for you...This pose refreshes tired legs and also has a relaxation effect
- This pose is one of the best restorative yoga poses to help with insomnia
- This pose deactivates the stress response in your body

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### CORPSE POSE

- Lie down on your back, feel your weight evenly distribute across your body
- Take a big deep breath and let your hands rest out to the sides of your body
- Let your feet relax, close your eyes, and drift off
- This pose balances out body weight and keeps internal organs aligned
- This pose allows you to get ready for a deep rest
- Back sleeping = better for back and neck

**At the end of your practice, repeat this to yourself and have a wonderful sleep:**

Stress and worry are released as my mind and body calm and prepare for sleep. I let positive thoughts take their place. I will sleep comfortably. When I wake up, I will open my heart to all the good things that come my way. Tomorrow is another opportunity, to fill my day with positivity, hope, and self-love

