

# From Sleepless Wonder to Well Rested, An ADHDer's Journey

Seattle CHADD

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Sleep Basics,  
ADHD Friendly Tools &  
Special Concerns

# Agenda

Welcome

Transition Activity: [Box Breathing](#)

Build Awareness: [Self Check In](#)

Manage Expectations: [Guidelines for Participation](#)

Presentation: [Please ask your questions as they arise](#)

Build Awareness: [Reflections & Open Discussion](#)

Thank You for Attending

# Jumping Right In!

## How Breathing Exercises Can Help Anxiety



Promotes relaxation



Reduces stress



Stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system



Brings you to the present moment



Relieves insomnia

# Let's do it together: Box Breathing

**Breathing/Centering Exercise** : Let's do this for 4 Breaths

Breath in (by nose) - 4 count

Hold - 4 count

Exhale (by mouth) - 4 count

Hold - 4 count

# Health benefits of box breathing

1. Improves mental well-being
2. Heightens cognitive performance
3. Enhances the body's future reactions to stress
4. Helps deactivate the fight-or-flight response

Let's do it together

**Self Check In:** How are you now? Language or Scale

Where are you using the scales?

Scale 1-5

5 is the top "Energized", 1 is the bottom "Fatigued"

# Guidelines for Participation

- 1) It's nice to be nice - Be kind and respectful, encourage and support one another
- 2) Confidentiality - Anything said here stays here
- 3) Have a beginner's mind - Be curious
- 4) Be present - Aware of the mood, other participants, your feelings
- 5) Please mute your line when not speaking & raise your hand to be called on



# Sleep Basics

# Lack of sleep impairs performance

Impacts of insufficient sleep:

- Reduced alertness
- Shortened attention span
- Reduced decision-making skills
- Poorer memory
- Reduced concentration
- Increased likelihood of mentally 'stalling' or fixating on one thought
- Increased likelihood of moodiness and bad temper
- Loss of motivation

**EVERYTHING IS FINE**



**EVERYTHING IS JUST FINE**

# Sleep Basics

**Get Regular:** To train the body for ideal sleep **go to bed & get up about the same times everyday**. A regular rhythm will improve how you feel and give your body a routine.

**When Sleepy:** Only **try to sleep when you feel tired or sleepy**, otherwise you will just be in bed staring at the ceiling.

**Try Again:** If you are awake after 20 minutes, get up - leave your bedroom. Do a calming activity so you **relax for sleep, then get back into bed**. No screens, internet or TV.

# Things to avoid

**Avoid Caffeine:** The effects of caffeine may last for several hours after ingestion, keeping you awake. Determine a **cut off time for caffeinated drinks** like coffee, or sodas.

**Avoid Nicotine:** Having a smoke before bed releases stimulants that can prevent you from getting to sleep. **Have a last smoke after dinner.**

**Avoid Alcohol:** Although alcohol has some sleep-inducing effect, metabolising it causes awakenings in the night. **Skip a 'nightcap'.**

# Good habits

**Sleep & Sex:** Don't use the bed as an office, workroom, gym or hobby space. Let your body **associate your bedroom with sleep and nookie**.

**Avoid Naps:** Napping can prevent you from being tired at bedtime. If you really need a daytime rest, look to **limit naps to 30 minutes before 3pm**.

**Sleep Routine:** Develop your sleep routine or “**bedtime order of operations**”: it can be a warm bath, a relaxation technique, soothing music, or reading. This is to get your body in the mood for sleep.

# Timing is everything

**No Clock Watching:** Clock watching is a vicious cycle. It reinforces negative thoughts about your sleep, leaving you anxious about how much (or how little) sleep you are getting. Do yourself a favor and **put your clock out of view**.

**Exercise Often:** **Do not exercise before bedtime**. Strenuous exercise releases endorphins that will cause difficulty in getting to sleep.

**Bedtime Snack:** **A light snack may help you sleep better**. Warm milk has L-tryptophan, an amino acid and serotonin precursor, which helps you get to sleep. Avoid heavy meals before bedtime.

# Prepare your mind and the sleep space

**Sleep Space:** **Having a conducive environment for sleep is essential.**

Comfortable bed, quiet surroundings with ideal room temperature will help greatly.

**Clear Mind:** Find ways to **relieve stress & anxiety before bed**. The bed is a place for rest, do not bring your worries to your sleep area.

**Sleep Diary:** **Log your sleep practice to identify problematic areas** that prevent you from falling asleep or staying asleep. Once identified these barriers can be overcome.



# Create a Sleep Haven

**Cool:** Your body cools at night, a cool room aids your body's rhythm

**Dark:** Block light with shade/curtains, eye mask

**Quiet:** Consider earplugs or conducive sound like white or pink noise

**Comfort:** Choose a mattress & pillows at your preferred firmness

# Sleep Diary - Keep it smart & simple

The diary should capture information that will reveal:

The minimum amount of sleep you need for a good day.

The optimal amount of sleep for you.

Any recurring barriers for getting to bed or staying asleep.

Your optimal wake time.

# Basic Sleep Tracker

Week 1	Time to Bed	Time Arose	Y/N fell asleep in 15 min.	1 Hr after waking, Feel Rested Scale 1-5	# of hours slept	Notes
Sunday						
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						

# ADHD Special Concerns

# ADHD gaps: Do these sound familiar?

**Poor working memory:** have a hard time remembering details, forgetful

**Impulsive:** take action without thought ie make a purchase, share opinion

**Emotionally reactive:** if you are upset everyone nearby knows it

**Struggle with frustration:** difficulty waiting your turn, impatient with yourself

**Flexible thinking:** something changed and you can't deal, or move forward

# Guidance from Experts

## Advice for managing ADHD:

- Get plenty of rest = Sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Meditate or mindful relaxation activities regularly
- Spend time in nature
- Connect with peers for support

# My Guiding Principles:

- Keep it Simple
- Lean into my strengths (like social skills)
- Take shortcuts like habit stacking
- New practices must fit in my schedule - no stretching
- Build on Success - slow and steady for sustainability
- Be kind to myself, have grace for missteps & mistakes

# The Executive Functions:

1. Emotional Control (Impulse)
  - a. Stress / frustration tolerance
2. Flexible Thinking
3. Self Monitoring/Metacognition
4. Organization
5. Planning/Prioritization
6. Impulse Control/Response Inhibition
7. Attention & Focus
8. Task Initiation
9. Time Keeping
10. Working Memory





# Executive Function Details

**Flexible Thinking:** The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes. It relates to adaptability to changing conditions.

**Impulse Control /Response Inhibition:** The capacity to think before you act – this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows us the time to evaluate a situation and how our behavior might impact it. Waiting in line without being disruptive is an example of response inhibition. Or accepting a referee’s call without an argument.

**Working Memory:** The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future. An example is holding in mind and following multiple-step directions.

**Emotional Control:** The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks or control / direct behavior.

**Stress or Frustration Tolerance:** Coping or managing emotions in the face of uncertainty, change, and other demands.

## SLEEP HYGIENE



### WHEN SLEEPY

Only try to sleep when you actually feel tired or sleepy, otherwise you will just be staring at your ceiling fan for a very long time.



### GET REGULAR

One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at about the same time everyday, even on weekends and days off. This regular rhythm will make you feel better and give your body something to work on.



### TRY AGAIN

If you find yourself awake after 20 minutes, get up and leave your bedroom. Find something that will help you relax and set you in the mood for sleep, but no internet or television!

### AVOID CAFFEINE

The effect of caffeine may last for several hours after ingestion, and you know caffeine keeps you awake. So you may want to reconsider having that nice cup of latte late in the evening.



### AVOID ALCOHOL

Sorry to be a party pooper, but having alcohol before bedtime is a bad idea. Although alcohol has a sleep-inducing effect, the metabolites that clear the alcohol from your body cause awakenings in the night.



### AVOID NICOTINE

Having a smoke before going to bed may seem like a great idea to help your body to relax, but you're really actually putting stimulants into your body that prevent you from sleeping.



### SLEEP & SEX

Don't use the bed as an office, workroom or recreational room, do these elsewhere. Let your body associate the bed with only sleep and heapy pants.

### AVOID NAPS

Napping prevents you from being tired when it comes to bedtime. If you really have to catch that forty winks, do make sure your nap is not longer than half an hour and before 3 p.m.



### NO CLOCK-WATCH

Clock-watching is a vicious cycle. It reinforces negative thoughts about your sleep, and you end up anxious about not having enough sleep. Do yourself a favour, hide that clock.



### SLEEP RITUALS

Develop your sleep ritual, it can be a warm bath, body relaxation technique, listening music or simply reading to set your body in the mood for sleep.



### EXERCISE OFTEN

Exercise is good, however do not carry out strenuous exercise before bedtime as it circulates endorphins into your body, causing difficulty in sleeping.

### BEDTIME SNACK

A light snack is recommended to help you sleep better, warm milk is ideal as it contains L-tryptophan, which helps you to sleep. However, avoid heavy meals before bedtime.



### CLEAR MIND

Find ways to relieve stress and aggression before you go to sleep. The bed is a place for rest, so do not bring your worries with you to bed.



### SLEEP SPACE

Having a conducive environment for sleep is essential. Comfortable bed, quiet surroundings with ideal room temperature will help greatly.



### SLEEP DIARY

Recording your sleep may help you to identify problematic areas that prevent you from falling asleep, some of these habits can be easily rectified.



# Sleep - a Keystone Habit

## What can a regular sleep do for you?

Improve: Working Memory & Emotional regulation

Focus & Mood

Decrease impulsivity

## Common Sleep Problems of ADHD Adults:

- Difficulty falling and staying asleep
- Increased alertness/activity during evening hours
- Late bedtimes
- Difficulty awakening, regardless of ample sleep
- Tiredness despite sleep

## Common Sleep Problems of ADHD Adults - medical conditions:

- Narcolepsy
- Restless Leg Syndrome
- Bruxism (teeth grinding)
- Sleep paralysis
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Delayed sleep phase syndrome (DSPS) a circadian rhythm abnormality

## Most Common Sleep Problem of ADHD Adults:

- Not going to bed when they intend too
- Second wind syndrome
- Bedtime Procrastination
- Craving “me time”
- Just one more ....game, video, show
- Cognitive distortions (ADHD fibs we tell ourselves)

## **Sleep Routine: Bedtime order of operations**

A bedtime routine helps shift the mind into sleep mode.

Consider setting a “get ready for bed” alarm to start the routine.

Put your phone on “do not disturb” mode, set it on the charger.

Assemble your tools: audio book, sleep mask, ear plugs, white noise

## Sleep Routine: **Wake up order of operations**

Have one alarm only, no snooze button.

Waking up sets the tone for your day, keep it simple.

A hot drink or food helps us become fully consciousness.

Only news that is relevant like weather or traffic, no doom scrolling.

Time outdoors in daylight helps reset your body clock or circadian rhythm.

For sleep tracking - 45 minutes after waking notice if you feel rested.

no snooze button







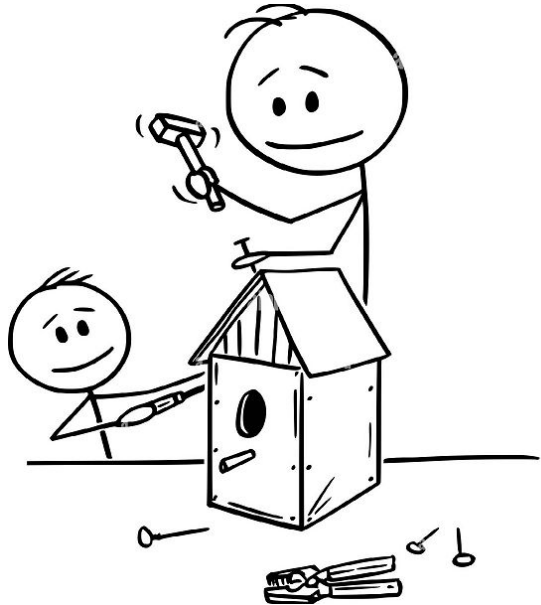
## Our common Interest?

We have ADHD and we want to live our best lives.



It is a lot easier **AND** more fun doing it together.

# Co-Working - doing it together!



Working together:

- In person
- Virtually
- At the same-time or not

Holding space for each other to “do” together.

The “Buddy System”!

**Sleep \* Exercise \* Mindfulness**

# The Bonus Benefits of Co-working

Trusted friends can share their observations and ask probing questions, supporting us in being our best selves

Friends can help us identify self-defeating thoughts

Friends can gently ask if we had working strategies that we forgot

Friends let us know we are not alone in our challenges

Friends can model habits and behaviors we want and it's okay to copy

When we have friends we feel seen and known

# Lessons Learned

The Buddy System works!

Having others to exercise or meditate with is motivating (task initiation)

Just seeing or hearing a friend gives us a boost (we are happier)

Progress and acknowledgement helps us notice those (self monitoring)

Regular or daily habit (planning)

# Guided Meditations

Melissa's Favorites:

Loving Kindness Sharon Salzberg 8 min <https://youtu.be/e-TeW9CI0bc>

Detach from intrusive thoughts by Easy Peace 10 min [https://youtu.be/phm\\_VPjijh8](https://youtu.be/phm_VPjijh8)

Confidence Booster Linda Hall 10 min <https://youtu.be/4e4a28fZ7zI>

The space between thoughts Giovanni 15 min: [https://youtu.be/pjPC0\\_WVPnY](https://youtu.be/pjPC0_WVPnY)

# Guided Practices

## Melissa's Favorites:

Kristin Neff Self Compassion Break 5 min

[https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/self-compassion.break\\_.mp3](https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/self-compassion.break_.mp3)

Non Sleep Deep Rest (NSDR) Andrew Huberman 10 min

<https://youtu.be/YrubXRXwxJc?si=qhu8WVSzQpEfo0t3>

Box Breathing the Navy Seal way 5 minutes

[https://youtu.be/RckZsDFiQjo?si=-h9BeMjED\\_uh5eTd](https://youtu.be/RckZsDFiQjo?si=-h9BeMjED_uh5eTd)

# Things I noticed:

Working Memory improved: I can do Wordle in my head vs using paper

Emotional Regulation improved: I use the car horn less than twice a week

Frustration Tolerance improved: I can sit at a redlight and enjoy the radio or music

Impulse Control improved: I can listen to people all the way thru their thought

Attention & Focus: Daily entries in my sleep log over 3 months

Flexible Thinking: When I can't access something on my phone I try my laptop.



Ideas



Do Not



Equal



Action



## Reflections & Open Discussion

This is time for:

- Sharing your feedback
- Reflecting on this topic
- Asking questions
- Sharing what works for you
- Sharing resources

Thank You for Attending

# Resources:

Sleep Stories: via APP - Calm, Audio Books, Audible, Public Library

Soothing Sounds: via APP - Calm, Insight Timer, YouTube, Spotify

Rumination Strategies: visualizations, meditations, breathing techniques

Non-Sleep Deep Rest: 10 minutes

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Contact :

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