

# Nourish to Flourish

Integrative Medical Group Visit Programs for Post-Acute Sequelae of COVID-19

## Week 3: The Importance of Healthy Sleep

In this session, we will discuss healthy sleeping behaviors and the importance of maintaining healthy sleep for overall health and well-being.

### Daily Agenda

- Centering meditation: Grounding and Arriving Meditation (GAM)
- Go around
- Home practice review
- Neuroplasticity: Our amazing brain bodies
- Breathwork: Humming
- Break (bring back something good to eat/smell/savor)
- Mindful Eating/Savoring meditation
- Health topic: The Importance of Sleep
- Health topic: Establishing Healthy Sleep Patterns; Stress and Mindfulness
- Discussion on Gratitude Journaling
- Introduce the Pleasant Events Chart and Triangle of Awareness
- Poem
- Home practice assignments

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## The Importance of Sleep

### *What is insomnia?*

- Insomnia is a common sleep disorder where individuals have a challenging time falling asleep, staying asleep, or both.
- Insomnia can be acute, meaning short-term, or chronic, meaning long-term.
  - » Acute insomnia can last for a few days or even weeks.
  - » Chronic insomnia can last for a month or longer.
- Sometimes insomnia can be related to another medical condition, medication, or substance. This is called secondary insomnia.
- Other times insomnia is its own distinct disorder. Many changing life circumstances can trigger insomnia, such stress or a traumatic event.

### *How does sleep affect my overall health?*

- The short-term effects of insomnia can include a lack of energy, irritability, lack of motivation, and trouble focusing. There are many long-term effects of insomnia, including anxiety disorders, depression, suppressed immune function, stress in the stomach and intestines, headaches, and weight gain.

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## Establishing Healthy Sleep Patterns

**Exercise is great**, but not too late in the day. Try to exercise at least 20-30 minutes on most days. Exercising too close to our bed times can make it harder to relax and transition into sleep.

**Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes each day.** If possible, wake up with the sun or use very bright lights in the morning. Sleep experts recommend that, if you have problems falling asleep, you should get an hour of exposure to morning sunlight and turn down the lights before bedtime.

**Focus on foods and beverages that promote sleep.** Chamomile tea, warm milk, bananas, soy, whole grain cereal, apples, almonds, and walnuts are all great choices. Try to consume these beneficial snacks at least 1 hour before bed so that the body has time to absorb the sleep promoting nutrients. Alcohol does not help us sleep better.

**Take a supplement to help support healthy sleep.** Taking a melatonin supplement (0.5-3 mg) one hour before bedtime.

**Be mindful of caffeine.** Caffeine is in coffee, colas, certain teas, and chocolate, and its effects can take as long as 8 hours to wear off fully. Therefore, a cup of coffee in the late afternoon can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night.

**Be mindful of nicotine.** Nicotine is also a stimulant, often causing smokers to sleep only very lightly. In addition, smokers often wake up too early in the morning because of nicotine withdrawal.

**Avoid large meals and beverages late at night.** Some commonly prescribed heart, blood pressure, or asthma medications, as well as some over-the-counter and herbal remedies for coughs, colds, or allergies, can disrupt sleep patterns. If you have trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor or pharmacist to see whether any drugs you're taking might be contributing to your trouble sleeping and ask whether they can be taken at other times during the day or early in the evening.

**Try to find a sleep schedule that works for you.** Getting into a rhythm of going to bed and waking up at the same time each day can be very helpful for training your body to sleep well.

**Find ways to relax before bed.** Try not to overschedule your day so that you can set aside time to unwind. A relaxing activity, such as reading, journaling, taking a bath, or listening to music, is a wonderful addition to your bedtime ritual.

**Have an inviting sleeping space.** Get rid of anything in your bedroom that might distract you from sleep, such as noises, bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or warm temperatures. You sleep better if the temperature in the room is kept on the cool side. ATV, cell phone, or

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computer in the bedroom can be a distraction and deprive you of needed sleep. Turn the clock's face out of view so you don't worry about the time while trying to fall asleep.

**Try a body scan or seated meditation.** If you find yourself still awake after staying in bed for more than 20 minutes or if you are starting to feel anxious or worried, get up and do some relaxing activity, like deep breathing, a body scan, or seated meditation, until you feel sleepy. The anxiety of not being able to sleep can make it harder to fall asleep.

**Promote Positive Thoughts.** Once sleep becomes a problem negative thought will quickly follow. These thoughts often come to mind automatically, but usually they are not completely true. Despite that fact, they still trigger the stress response, (also called "fight or flight") and worsen insomnia.

The good news is that the opposite is also true. Positive thoughts can lead to positive changes in the mind and body. This is one of the principals behind a very successful type of therapy called Cognitive Behavioral Psychology.

- » Step 1: Identify Negative Sleep Thoughts--Write them down. Use the journal on the website.
- » Step 2: Assess any distortions; is there another way of looking at the situation?
- » Step 3: Reframe the negative statements in a more positive way

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## Gratitude Journaling: Promoting Positive Thoughts

Research has shown that people who write about things that they are grateful about actually become happier even over the course of just a few weeks.

### *Using a Gratitude Journal*

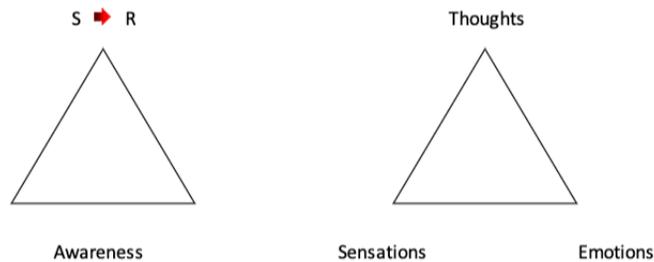
- Keep your journal in a place where you will see it at the end of each day
- Try and write about at least three experiences each time. This is regular, simple and doable. However, go for depth over breadth. Even if you just focus on one thing, go into detail about why the experience made you grateful.
- Another option is to express yourself through drawing, painting, creating a collage, or any way that feels like the best fit for you.
- Experiment with the types of things you write about. You can do obvious things ("I am grateful for my children") or more subtle things ("I am grateful that it stopped raining when I stepped outside") but try to do both.
- Remember that all gratitude doesn't need to be saved for the journal. Tell the people—both loved ones and strangers—in your life how much you appreciate them.
- Get personal. Research shows that focusing on people to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on things for which you are grateful.
- Savor surprises. Try to record events that were unexpected or surprising, as these tend to bring about stronger levels of gratitude.

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## *The Triangle of Awareness*

- Our normal reaction to a stimulus is usually completely habitual and mindless. The triangle of awareness helps us understand our emotions and can be used to help us recognize small pleasant things that happen in our daily lives.
  - » S = Something happens (stress or a stimulus)
  - » R = Reaction/response
  - » A = Awareness of emotions, thoughts, physical sensations and behaviors



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## The Pleasant Events Chart

| Session 3                      | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Situation                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Body Experience/<br>Sensations |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Emotions                       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Thoughts                       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |

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## Recipe of the Week: White Bean and Spinach Salad

Combining foods high in vitamin C and iron can increase absorption of iron, creating a major energy boost!

### Ingredients

#### Salad

- 2, 15-ounce cans of no-salt added white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
  - Note: soaking sliced onions in a bowl of cold water for 15 minutes or more can take away the bitter flavor.
- 1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 4 cups of fresh spinach leaves, tough stems removed and torn into bite-sized pieces.



Image credit: [www.wholefoodsmarket.com](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com)

#### Dressing

- 4 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 teaspoon of Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon balsamic or apple cider vinegar, or lemon juice
- 1 garlic glove, minced
- Black pepper and any other desired herbs to taste.

### Instructions

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine white beans, sliced onion, bell pepper and spinach.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together mustard, vinegar and black pepper. Pour dressing over the bean mixture and stir to combine all ingredients.
3. Serve immediately or chill until ready to use.

### Health Benefits

- » Spinach and beans are both very high in iron, a mineral that plays a crucial role in good health. Iron deficiencies are very common, and one symptom is restless leg syndrome, which can disrupt sleep patterns
- » Combining foods high in vitamin C, such as bell peppers, and foods high in iron, such as white beans, can increase the absorption of iron into your blood stream up to 5 times faster.

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## Poem

### *In Blackwater Woods*

Look, the trees  
are turning  
their own bodies  
into pillars

of light,  
are giving off the rich  
fragrance of cinnamon  
and fulfillment,

the long tapers  
of cattails  
are bursting and floating away over  
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,  
and every pond,  
no matter what its name is,

is nameless now.  
Every year  
everything  
I have ever learned

in my lifetime  
leads back to this: the fires  
and the black river of loss  
whose other side

is salvation,  
whose meaning  
none of us will ever know.  
To live in this world

you must be able  
to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it

against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.

- *Mary Oliver*

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## Home Practice for Next Week

### **Mind-Body Practice**

- Practice the body scan, 6 out of 7 days
- Practice meditation, 6 out of 7 days

### **Daily Life Practice**

- Write down 3 things that you are grateful for in the journal.
- Bring mindfulness to your routine activities. Try brushing your teeth, washing dishes, taking a shower, driving, and eating mindfully.

### **Manual Activity**

- Fill out the Pleasant Events Chart

### **Health Topic Video**

- The Importance of Healthy Sleep