

## Lead a series of youth workshops – *Lesson 4: Super Sleep*

Sleep is a critical component of dealing with stress. If teens are not getting enough sleep, the hard stuff is going to get a lot harder. Use the steps that follow to help teens understand their own sleep habits and learn ways to improve them.

### What You Need

- Electronic devices for each participant or one with a larger screen that can be seen by all
- Internet connection
- Smart Board or projector
- Copies of the [Sleep Tracker](#)

### Step 1: Check In – Mindful Movement Practice

Ask participants to share how their mindful movement practice went. Discuss which movements they chose and liked, and why.

### Step 2: Sleep – What’s the Big Deal

Explain that sleep is a critical component of dealing with stress. If we don’t get enough sleep the hard stuff gets a lot harder.

It’s fair to say that overall, teens in the U.S. are in the middle of a sleep crisis. For most, 9-10 hours a night is ideal. However, many teenagers aren’t getting enough sleep to recharge their bodies. Many teens report being drowsy upon waking, tired during the day, and wakeful at night.

But if teens are getting by this way, does sleep really matter?

The answer is yes, it absolutely matters. In addition to *feeling* better physically and emotionally, getting enough sleep has many benefits for teens, including:

- Lower likelihood of getting sick.
- Greater likelihood of staying at a healthy weight because lack of sleep causes hormones that affect weight to become out of balance.
- Lower risk of developing high blood pressure and diabetes.
- Boosting brainpower! Teens will be able to think more clearly at school and perform better on things that matter to them, whether it’s school, work, arts, sports, or just life in general.

- Increased likelihood of making better, more healthful decisions.

Now share with the group some signs that *they* might be suffering from a lack of sleep:

- Irritability
- Difficulty making decisions
- Decreases ability to concentrate
- Lower hand-eye coordination
- Increased illness (both mental and physical)
- FEELING TIRED A LOT!

Explain that some people think it's okay to get just a few hours of sleep a night during the week and then make up for it on the weekends. However, sleep doesn't work that way. Our bodies need regular, consistent rest and time to reset.

Getting enough sleep is easier said than done, right? Many teens find the rest of the world doesn't function on the same schedule their bodies do. That's because biological changes during adolescence can make it difficult to fall asleep before 11:00 or so, which in turn means sleeping later in the morning.

Fortunately there are some things they can do to help improve their chances of a good night's sleep. A first step is to learn about their own sleep-related habits. Have participants use the Sleep Tracker provided at the end of the lesson to figure out how much sleep they're getting and what things they're doing at night that might be helping or causing problems.

### **Step 3: Head-to-Toe Relaxation**

Listen to the audio or read the "Head-to-Toe Relaxation" meditation script aloud to the group. When you've finished, ask the group these questions:

- How do you feel?
- What did you notice during this relaxation practice?
- At what points during your day could you use a few minutes of relaxation? Do you think practicing using this method could help you do that?

Point out that doing this relaxation activity in bed at night can be a way to help participants fall asleep.

["Head-to-Toe Relaxation" meditation script \(pdf\)](#)

#### **Step 4: Just Breathe Meditation**

Listen to the audio or read the “Just Breath” meditation script aloud to the group. When you’ve finished, ask the group these questions:

- How do you feel?
- What did you notice during this relaxation practice?
- At what points during your day could you use a few minutes of relaxation? Do you think practicing using this method could help you do that?

Point out that doing this relaxation activity in bed at night can be a way to help participants fall asleep.

[“Just Breathe” meditation script \(pdf\)](#)

#### **Step 5: Mindful Movement**

As time and space allow, pick and choose as many or as little of the following mindful movement relaxation activities to follow along with. These simple, short exercises provide teens with more options to help them feel better and stress less.

- Front Stretch Right: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSs06opurd0>
- Front Stretch Left: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBDSIH\\_t--k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBDSIH_t--k)
- Basic Spine Flex: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRxbqzq1oEw>
- Neck Turns: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmY85gSirlc>
- Washing Machine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wutpgAQZj6Y>
- Shoulder Rolls: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK6VtanFiZI>
- Shoulder Shrugs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CalCnGnZ7NY>
- Half-Moon Neck Rolls: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9SF1e7B8h4>

#### **Step 6: Chill at Home**

Distribute the Sleep Tracker handout or let participants know they can use it online, and encourage them to track their sleep for one week to get a sense of how well and how much they are actually sleeping. Ask them to report back at your next session what they learned and any patterns they may have noticed.

[“Sleep Tracker” handout \(pdf\)](#)