

## BRAIN WIND-DOWN ACTIVITIES

Settling down before sleep can sometimes be tricky. These activities can help calm your brain and prepare you for a good night's rest. Try them out and find what works best for you!

---

### Relaxation Activities

- **Deep Breathing:** Try **Box Breathing**—just breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, breathe out through your mouth for 4 seconds, and hold again for 4 seconds, then repeat. Imagine breathing in through your nose, like **smelling a flower**, and out through your mouth, **like blowing out candles**. This can help your brain and body relax.
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Start at your toes, tense the muscles for 5 seconds, then relax. Move up through your body (feet, legs, arms) until you feel calm.
- **Guided Meditation:** Listen to a calming story or meditation audio designed for kids. Apps like Calm or Headspace have kid-friendly options.
- **Try the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique:** Follow each step slowly and thoroughly.
  - **Look at 5** different things and think about each for a few moments
  - **Listen to 4** different sounds and think about where they came from
  - **Touch 3** different things and notice how they feel. Example: sheets feel cool on my legs and my socks feel warm and fuzzy on my feet.
  - Note **2 smells**. Baked goods in the kitchen or the smell of soap on skin after a shower are examples.
  - Pay attention to **1 thing you can taste**. If just getting in bed, it may be the faint taste of toothpaste

---

### Screen-Free Activities

- **Coloring or Drawing:** Use calming colors and focus on simple designs to help your brain slow down.
- **Sculpting with clay or playdough:** **Using your hands to create something often helps calm the mind**
- **Reading a Book:** Pick a quiet, non-exciting story to read before bed.
- **Puzzle Time:** Try an easy jigsaw puzzle or build with Duplo's or Legos
- **Listen to an audiobook:** Pick a long book so you can listen to a little bit each evening and have something to look forward to when you get into bed each night

---

### Prepare Your Environment

- **Dim the Lights:** Bright lights can keep your brain alert. Turn off bright lights an hour before bedtime. If total darkness when sleeping is uncomfortable, add a dim nightlight.
- **Make your bed cozy:** Adding a favorite blanket or stuffed animal can be helpful
- **Remove distractions:** Keep toys, devices, and bright clocks out of the bed area. The bed should be for sleeping, not playing or watching show
- **Create a Routine:** Doing the same things every night (like taking a shower or bath, then brushing your teeth, then reading) helps signal your brain to wind down.
- **White Noise or Calm Sounds:** Use a fan, white noise machine, or soft music to block out distractions.

---

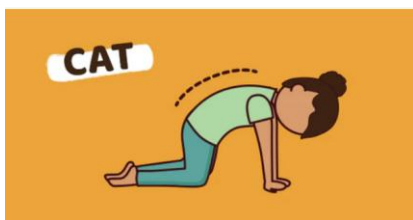
## Positive Thinking

- **Gratitude Practice:** Think about 3 good things that happened today. Write them in a notebook or journal or share them with a parent.
- **Mindful Visualization:** Close your eyes and imagine a favorite peaceful place, like a beach. Your imagination is amazing, so really think about your favorite place and imagine all the details. Your imagination can make the place the best place ever! Imagine what you see, what you are wearing, how your feet feel walking in the sand, who you are with, what activities you are doing, how you are feeling. Each night you can think about the place again and add more images, or you can think about another favorite place and build it in your mind, like in Minecraft.

---

## Physical Activities

- **Stretching:** Try a few slow, easy stretches or yoga poses like Child's Pose or Cat-Cow



<https://flowandgrowkidsyoga.com/>

- **Try the Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose** which has been proven to help with anxiety and panic
- **Light Movement:** If you're feeling restless, do 5-10 minutes of slow, calming exercises, like walking in place or walking up and down a hallway.
- **Butterfly taps** are a technique to help reduce stress and make you feel more calm
  1. Sit comfortably and cross your arms over your chest, so your hands rest on your upper arms or shoulders.
  2. Slowly tap one hand, then the other, like a butterfly's wings flapping, while taking deep breaths and focusing on a calming thought or image.
  3. Keep tapping alternately and gently for a few minutes, paying attention to how your body feels as you relax.

---

## Tips from Experts

- **Stick to a Schedule:** Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day helps your body get into a rhythm.
- **Avoid Caffeine and Sugar:** Avoid these in the evening, as they can make it harder to relax
- **Limit Screen Time:** Turn off screens (TV, tablet, phone) at least one hour before bed to help your brain wind down

**Make bedtime a peaceful time! You've got this!**