

# Sleeping easy

Rob McNeilly



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# foreword by Dan Short

As anybody with sleep issues knows, the absence of sound sleep negatively impacts energy levels and our emotional readiness to face the day's challenges. The time we reserve for sleeping must be characterized by feelings of comfort, safety, and freedom from effort-. Natural sleep cannot be forced.

Hypnosis, which is inherently relaxing, has been used to help people disconnect from waking attention since its conception. With a long well-established history as a safe procedure, hypnosis is one of the best options available for those who suffer sleep deprivation. When listening to a trance induction by an expert hypnotherapist, you will find that you become deeply relaxed and that your body's natural sleep cycle is once again leading you to states of restorative sleep.

The author of this book, Rob McNeilly, is widely recognized for his skill with hypnosis. In addition to having studied with Milton H. Erickson, McNeilly has subsequently been described as one of the most knowledgeable practitioners of Ericksonian methods in Australia. Throughout the years, I have been delighted to watch McNeilly work with individuals. I have appreciated having access to recordings of his work for use while teaching hypnosis to medical students. I use McNeilly's work as a classic example of Ericksonian hypnosis because of the attitudinal tone of his voice and the feelings of comfort and safety that his suggestions elicit. McNeilly's approach to hypnosis is characterized by effortless involvement—exactly what is needed for healthy sleep.

As I often say to my students, suffering ceases to be traumatic the moment we find that we can do something about it. This delightful book empowers the reader to shift into a different state of mind, whenever needed, in the privacy of one's home. Sweet dreams.

Dan Short, Ph.D.

Director of the Milton Erickson Institute of Phoenix

# introduction

Hello. My name's Dr. Rob McNeilly and I've been a doctor for more than 40 years now, and a therapist more than 30 years, helping a large number of people with a wide variety of problems. I've also been teaching this approach for about 30 years. And I've discovered that in my experience, everyone's different. There's no one single way that is going to help everyone with every problem.

So, in this series of experiences, which are related specifically to overcoming difficulties with sleeping, my invitation is to allow yourself to find your own individual way of learning from these experiences, just what's going to be most helpful to you.

I've discovered that as part of the differences between individuals, some people have trouble going to sleep, some people have trouble staying asleep, some people have trouble going back to sleep if they wake up, and some people have trouble with a feeling of not being rested when they wake up in the morning. And of course, there could be combinations of these.

So, in this series, I've specifically attended to one or each of those problems at a time and the final one includes a lot of different aspects of that particular problem.

So, you might want to listen to each of them in turn and find out which is going to be most helpful. And then, once you found that, to listen to that a number of times until you've learnt it. And once you've learnt it, there probably won't be any need for you to continue listening to this. It can be surprisingly easy to get back in touch with your own natural ability to go to sleep, to sleep soundly, to have a restful sleep and wake up feeling energised.

Of course, because all of these experiences involve focus and absorption, they should only be listened to when you are completely safe. Don't, of course, listen to these presentations while you're driving, or working with machinery, doing anything that requires your attention in what you're doing. They don't have to be listened to as you're going to sleep, although they can be.

So, again, my invitation is to try the different sessions, see which is going to be most useful and then just allow that learning to happen in any way that's useful to you and beneficial to you.

# general comfort

Now, as you begin this session, what I invite you to do is to make yourself more or less comfortable. You don't need to be too comfortable. You can be sitting in a chair or lying down on your bed, it really doesn't matter, or lying on the floor. And as you continue to do that, it might be useful to you, pleasing to you, helpful to you, if you were to begin to notice some feeling of comfort somewhere in your body, maybe a feeling of relaxation, perhaps more a sense of stillness. In whatever way that you can, just notice how some part of your body can be particularly comfortable.

And as you allow this to continue, it may not be so much the comfort, it may be that you become aware of some very pleasing sound, or quietness that you can hear and just allow it to be whatever it is. It might be the sound of rain on the roof, it may be the sound of traffic, the sound of a clock tick ticking. It really doesn't matter. But just, whatever it is that you happen to be aware of, just allowing it to be exactly as it is.

Or it may be that it could be pleasing for you to notice your breathing, to be aware of the air as it goes in through your nose, to notice the temperature, the feeling of that air and how different it is when you breathe out. Is the air softer, or is it warmer? Would you begin to notice the movement of your body as you breathe, the movement of your chest or your stomach.

And as all of this is happening, of course, you can hear the words that I'm speaking, but there really is no need for you to give any special attention to it. You might even find that as I'm talking, you don't need to listen to me. You could just let your mind drift to some very pleasant experience, some holiday, to something that's happened in the past that was particularly pleasing and comforting. Or perhaps, let your mind drift to some anticipated future experience, something that you can look forward to where you can be calm, and become comfortable and really look forward to in a peaceful, easy way.

It may be that as you continue with this experience, you could find yourself imagining that you are doing something very enjoyable, something that you really like. For some people, this may be gardening, or walking in nature, or relaxing in a warm bath, or reading a book. It really doesn't matter what it is that can be something that is particularly enjoyable that you could just find yourself recalling and experiencing again.

And as you allow this to continue, there's really nothing that you need to do. There's no effort to be made. There may be some colours that you happen to notice. There may be some images that just come and go. You don't need to particularly quieten your mind. It isn't even necessary to be particularly comfortable, but simply to allow whatever is happening, whatever happens to be your experience right now, to just allow it to be exactly as it is, allowing yourself to be exactly how you are.

Making any adjustments to add to your comfort, sense of wellbeing, just doing whatever you can, whatever you wish, whatever you would like. And to add to that feeling of peace

and quiet, stillness, easy movement, comfort, maybe sense of security, perhaps some physical relaxation. It really doesn't matter, but as it's continuing, there may be some part of this experience that as you allow yourself to really notice it, becomes something that you can become naturally and easily more familiar with simply by taking the time to allow yourself to fully experience whatever you happen to be experiencing to get to know this feeling that you like that's going to be helpful to you, get to know it even more thoroughly than you already do.

And it's not necessary to intentionally remember it. It can be a feeling that your body can learn and that you don't even need to know just how. It already is and it might seem perfectly obvious that each time you listen to this session that each time you can very naturally find yourself becoming more and more familiar with some part of this experience, which is your experience so that once you've learnt it, it's just there, available to you anytime that's useful.

When someone first learns to write their name, it can be effortful, unfamiliar, troublesome, but as someone learns to write their name recurrently, the writing becomes automatic, natural. You don't need to think about it. You could even do it with your eyes closed. And so, in learning this experience, it can be in a similar way an experience for you that you just learn it and once you've learnt it, it's part of you. It's available to you naturally, effortlessly, anytime.

# going to sleep

So, just as soon as you're ready, you could find yourself sitting in a comfortable chair, lying on the floor, or you might even enjoy lying in your bed. And then as you are sitting or lying exactly as you are, you could allow yourself to begin to feel just a little more at ease, a little more comfortable, perhaps letting your body relax ever so slightly, or perhaps noticing how without making any effort, you find yourself feeling just a little more comfortable, a little more at ease.

And again, you could begin to notice your breathing, the air as it goes in and then out of your body. You could begin to pay attention to the feeling of relaxation or comfort in your body and just allowing time to pass without any particular expectation, without any pressure, just being in the experience that you happen to find yourself in at this moment.

And again, you really don't need to listen to me. My words are so unimportant. All that's important is that you can in some way, allow yourself to begin to feel more the way you would like to feel, just letting that sense of comfort and ease increase at its own pace, in a natural way without having to make any effort, without having to try to do anything, without even needing to notice just how that sense of comfort and ease can increase all by itself.

And then, as you allow that to continue, it may be that you find yourself again remembering some very pleasant experience in the recent or distant past, or begin to look forward to some very pleasant experience in the future, or allow yourself, as you become more focused on some aspect of this experience so that you can become then more absorbed in the experience, which is so comforting, so easy, so effortless. And become more absorbed in that way without trying or needing to do anything and just allowing that.

Perhaps being absorbed in, imagining that you are doing something now that is pleasing to you, some activity that you enjoy, or used to enjoy or would like to enjoy. And any thoughts that happen to come, you can just let them come and go, let them be there until they leave of their own accord. And as part of this experience, you may have closed your eyes, or you may have started with your eyes open. It really doesn't matter. And if your eyes were open to start with, perhaps they're already closed or getting ready to close. None of this is important. The important part of this learning experience is to begin to become more familiar with the evolving experience of increasing comfort.

And of course, that doesn't have to happen in any smooth and even way. You might find that you're starting to feel so much more comfortable and at ease, and then some disquieting thought disturbs that, and that's fine. The comfort can come and go, that sense of ease can be there and then not so obviously there, but with this process of learning, each time you allow yourself to be in this experience, it's like learning anything. The more you are familiar with this experience, the easier and the quicker you'll be able to find it and

it might be surprising for you to discover just how quickly you don't even need to go looking for that feeling of comfort and ease. It can be as if that feeling can find you.

Any learning can begin somewhat tentatively, slowly, intermittently, but as we learn anything, it's part of a natural experience, which then becomes part of us, part of who we are, just like walking, just like breathing, just like writing your name, just like learning the letters of the alphabet.

There may have been a time when some of those learnings seemed difficult, but now we can look back and smile at the way it used to be difficult, but now it's not only easy, not only natural, but that learning is so much a part of us, you don't even need to be aware that it is.

And so, as you find yourself becoming more familiar with your experience of increasing comfort and sense of ease, as you learn this, it can be something that you can take with you anywhere and use it anytime that is helpful to you, useful to you. And you can learn to write your name on a piece of paper with a pencil, and then later, you can write your name with a pen, or with your finger on a steamed-up window. Once we've learned something, it becomes a part of us.

And so, as you become more familiar with this experience, and notice how it is as it begins and to become more familiar with how it feels to you as that feeling of focus and absorption, and your own experience of comfort and sense of ease is that it mightn't surprise you. It might be a sense of relief. It might be just a wonderful experience to see just how soon, how naturally, how easily, when you get into bed at night, ready to sleep, how you can just simply and natural, effortlessly begin to re-experience this feeling. So then, you can just naturally and easily begin to drift into a restful, peaceful, refreshing sleep.

And I don't know just how soon you'll find just how easy this can be.



# staying asleep

Now, just as soon as you're ready, you can again find yourself sitting comfortably, lying on the floor, or perhaps even in your bed. And as you continue with these sessions, you might already be beginning to notice that it's just a little easier, or maybe even a lot easier each time you revisit this experience and become more familiar with just how it is for you to learn the mood, the feeling, the experience of becoming even more comfortable.

Finding yourself becoming again even more familiar with that natural sense of ease as you begin to let your mind drift and go anywhere that's pleasing, that's comforting where you can feel even more the way you would like to feel.

And again, you might like to notice just how it is, as you begin to feel even more comfortable to begin to notice and learn your experience of feeling that sense of ease with nothing really troubling you. Just a quietness and a feeling of good in yourself, with yourself.

There may be some sounds around that you can enjoy, allowing to just be there. There may be some thoughts that are there for a time and then begin to drift away. And as you continue listening to what I'm saying, you don't need to pay any particular attention to my words, to me, or to anything other than your experience of becoming more comfortable with a greater sense of ease and feeling the way you want to feel.

And if you haven't already closed your eyes, you might be interested to notice how easily and comfortably you could let your eyes close. Or if you prefer, to leave them open for a time and then just let them close in their own way, in their own time because there is no right way to do this. There is no correct way. It's just your way. And as you continue to become more familiar with just what that way is that your way is a way for you to get away from anything troubling and disturbing, and way easier to allow that sense of comfort and wellbeing to increase without any effort on your part, without you needing to try to do anything.

And there may be very pleasant memories of recent or long-forgotten enjoyable experiences, or perhaps you can begin to look forward to something pleasing, comforting in the future. There may be some colours or shapes that you could be interested to pay attention to, or to just be there in the background.

And of course, as you continue to breathe, you might find it enjoyable and comforting to let your attention rest on the experience of breathing and just notice each breath, and find some comfort in that. Breathing in, breathing out, noticing the air, how it feels, noticing the movement of your body as you breathe in and breathe out, or perhaps just letting all of that become more and more in the background as you're feeling an experience of comfort and sense of ease increases naturally.

And with any learning, the more familiar you become with something, the more you get to know it, the more you learn it, the easier it is for you to just naturally, effortlessly begin to connect again with that experience as it continues.

And as this experience is continuing for you, it could be useful for you to become aware of the possibility of disturbing your comfort. And you could become aware of the possibility of moving, getting up, doing something quite different and to notice the possibility that. And then as part of your learning to just notice that for a moment or two and then let it go. Let it drift away because even though you could at any time get up, do something different move around, you might be able to enjoy the feeling that you just can't be bothered doing that. You could, but a person can feel so comfortable that even though they could get up and do something, we could just prefer to remain quietly, comfortably in that experience of increasing ease.

And you could allow that to continue and as it continues, to notice that it can somehow seem to increase and you become even more comfortable as you continue. And then again, you could allow yourself to begin to become aware of the possibility of disrupting this. And again, even though you know it's very possible to disrupt it, what's the experience like for you as you just allow the comfort to continue, just allow that sense of ease to increase so that even though you could disrupt this, get up and do something, if you can just let that possibility drift away as that sense of comfort and ease continues.

And as you become more absorbed in it, as you become more familiar with it, as you get to know it even better than you already are, you can allow that learning to be a progression that so very easily, very naturally can become a part of your experience, can be something that as you allow that learning, you can then translate into your experience of sleeping and discovering perhaps with delight or surprise how easily you have been able to continue to sleep without being disturbed, without being bothered. Just allowing that as that experience is your experience and learning it becomes a natural part of what has happened for you that can allow your sleep to [inaudible 11:31] exactly like you want.

# getting back to sleep

So, just as soon as you're ready, you can find yourself again sitting comfortably in your chair, lying on the floor, lying on your bed. And as I continue to talk, you don't need to listen to me. You can allow my voice to be in the background, only paying attention to anything that's relevant or useful or helpful to you. Because each person is different, I can't know how best to speak to you, but you know in your own way deep in your understanding, your own understanding exactly what it is that is going to be helpful to you. And so, you can translate my words, anything that I say to make it useful to you and beneficial to you.

And as you allow yourself to begin to focus on something pleasing, something comfortable, something comforting so that as you become absorbed then in that experience, there can be a natural increasing of your sense of ease, of wellbeing, comfort, of security.

And with any learning, as you allow yourself to become more familiar over time, taking your own time, which can be a short time or even slightly longer time. It really doesn't matter. The more familiar you become with your experience of increasing comfort, the easier it will be for you to find that experience of comfort.

And again, if you were to allow your attention to rest on some physical comfort, maybe some relaxation in some part of your body, or some other pleasant sensation, it really doesn't matter what. Or you might find yourself noticing your breathing, the natural rhythm and the sense of the air as you breathe it in, and how different that is when you let that air, as you breathe it out. Or there may be some shapes or colours that you see or become aware of in your mind's eye, or some pleasant, comforting memory, recent or long past, or the anticipation of some future pleasing, comforting experience.

You could find yourself imagining and enjoying the experience of doing something that you like to do, listening to music, walking in nature, relaxing in a warm bath, working in the garden, whatever it might be. There may be something that I haven't mentioned and that's fine. You can discover and go to any experience that you can find yourself feeling comfortable and that sense of ease. And find it even easier as you continue to become more familiar with it and learn that experience.

And you could allow that sense of increasing comfort to just progress in its own way, at its own rate, taking its own time, and letting yourself go along with that. And if you would, I'd like you to notice just how this experience is for you to, in some way, memorise your experience right now, perhaps to notice some particular sense of comfort or relaxation in some particular area of your body. Or it may be just a general mood, or a sound or a sense. It really doesn't matter what it is, but if you could, take a moment to really soak this experience up, really experience it, really notice it, to let yourself become even more familiar, to just take a moment to do that.

And then, when you're ready, I'd like you to open your eyes, and stand up and move around, walk around for just a little while, look out the window, or open the door, or do something so that you can have a sense of being really out of that experience that you were in just a short time ago.

And then as part of your learning, I'd like you to go back to where you were, to sit in the same chair, lie on about the same part of the floor or in the same bed. And then as you do that, to notice how very easy it is for you to remember that experience that you had just a short time ago. Just allow the memory of that feeling of comfort and ease and that experience of knowing that for the time, there's nothing that you need to do.

And it can be as if that memory can just wash over you without you making any effort. It can be as if the memory of that experience can just find you as you begin to, again, let yourself notice the increasing comfort and as you, again, allow yourself to become more absorbed in this experience.

Now, I don't know if it might surprise you to discover that as you do this, it can be even easier than when we started because you already know the feeling, the feeling knows you. It's as if each time you move away from it, you learn just a little more about how to move towards it. Each time that feeling of comfort and ease is disrupted, you get just that little more practice each time of finding your way back to it, remembering it, so that each time you do that, you have an opportunity to learn it, even more thoroughly, even more completely, even more naturally and more easily.

And as you allow your experience, because that's where the learning is happening, as you allow that to continue, it can be such a pleasing relief, maybe even a delightful surprise to discover just how naturally, easily this can translate into your experience so that as you learn in this way, you can translate that into learning how to use that. If you should happen to wake up at night without making any effortful attempt, you can allow that good feeling, that comfortable, safe, secure, easy feeling, just allow that to find you and connect with it again so that you can just drift back into that restful, healing, comforting sleep.

# waking refreshed

And when you're ready, you might be ready to sit on a chair comfortably enough, or lie on the floor, or on your bed, and allow yourself to again, begin to remember that feeling of comfort and ease where there's really nothing that you need to do. You don't need to listen to me. You don't need to be concerned about anything for this time.

You may close your eyes, or leave them open for a time until they start to recognise they want to close. There's really no right way to do this. And you don't need to pay attention to my words. You don't need to listen to anything unless it's useful to you, or relevant to you or helpful to you. And you might like to notice your body, see if any particular area of your body that is especially comfortable, especially at ease, or notice your breathing and how that is to breathe in, breathe out. And to be aware of some pleasant sounds from the outside environment, and if any thoughts come, they could come and you can just let them go. You don't need to push them away. Just let anything that is there, just let it be there.

And any pleasant memories, or anticipations or any pleasurable activity, where you can with increasing ease, find yourself lost in the experience of not even needing to notice how easily that sense of comfort can increase. And when there's nothing that you need to do, no effort to make, you really don't need to do anything at all. You don't even need to notice that comfort as it increases. Or it may not be so much comfort. It may be feeling of relaxation, or perhaps the experience drifting and floating securely, safely, or perhaps something quite different that you may not even expected that can be even more useful to you.

And there could be any number of thoughts or possible distractions, but for the time, you can be unconcerned about them. They could just be there for a time, and then they can just drift away so that you don't need to be bothered by them. You don't need to attend to them. The only thing that's important now is your experience of comfort and feeling the way you want to feel, knowing that the more familiar you become with this experience, the more you learn it, the sooner it will become an automatic part of you so that it's there for you to use any time that you want to or that's useful to you.

And it can be such a delightful experience to really feel that sense of being okay. It can be such a relief, such a release to let go all of those worries that we all have. Just put them aside for the time. And if they come, they can just be there for a time and then drift away. That's fine. They can be there for a time, but you don't need to be disturbed by them. You just come back to your own feeling of comfort and relaxation.

And I think it would be so nice if, as you are in this experience and learning it, becoming even more familiar with it that if you allow this experience to continue for a time, you can already begin to look forward to the benefit of having had this time out, this time off. You can already look forward to the relief of feeling refreshed, enlivened, invigorated, feeling energised, ready for whatever is there to take your attention afterwards.

And so, it might be so nice if you could just let yourself sit or lie in this experience now, knowing that in a moment or two, when you open your eyes, and perhaps you can already begin to look forward to that when you open your eyes to feel that wonderful sense of relief like you've put a burden behind you, like there's so much more energy there, so much more ability there, so that you can then feel refreshed and ready for whatever's there.

So, perhaps you could just take a moment and get ready. Then, when you're ready, and only then, open your eyes and notice how good that feels, how energised you feel and get used to that too. That's also a learning.

# combination

Now, just as soon as you're ready. You don't need to be in a rush with any of this. You can sit comfortably enough or lie down somewhere, anywhere that's comfortable. And notice how easy it's becoming to allow that feeling of comfort, that increasingly familiar feeling of ease, how as you continue with this experience and learn the feeling that you want, the experience that's going to be helpful to you. As you learn anything, it just naturally becomes more available, more easily, readily there.

So, again, you don't need to listen to me. My voice can be in the background, just like anything else can be in the background. And you can pay attention to anything important, but you can let anything that is not important for the moment, you can just let that drift off into the distance. And you can give as much attention or as little attention as is useful to you, to your breathing, your physical comfort, or to any images, or memories or imaginings. Give as little or as much attention as is helpful to you.

As this experience is continuing and as you can continue to be increasingly absorbed in the comfort and sense of ease so that whatever is there can just be there. And you can be unconcerned for the time and simply allow yourself as you're becoming even more familiar with the experience of comfort and ease, as you allow that learning, which is your learning, it belongs to you, to be there more thoroughly, more completely and get to know this experience.

It can just be there for you any time you need it or want it. And so, you can find your way back to it, or it can find its way back to you with no effort, no strain, nothing, just a willingness to allow this experience of your comfort, your ease to be just a part of you that's there anytime, if that will be useful for you.

And if you're interested, you could allow yourself to begin to notice the possibility of some distraction, some interruption, perhaps even allow yourself to get slightly annoyed by a sound or sensation or memory. And then what happens when you just let that be there for a time so that it can just drift away, or you can allow it to be just part of the background of your experience? And even though there was a possibility of disruption, you didn't need to be disrupted at all. You don't even need to pay attention to it, to remember it. You can forget that there was that potential disruption. And then allow that sense of comfort and ease. Just allow it.

And again, if you're interested, you could intentionally actively disrupt this experience. Stand up, walk around, close the door, do something and be very aware of how different this feels. And then, once you've had the experience of noticing the difference, you could go back to that chair, you could go back to the lying down and you can go back to that now increasingly familiar experience of comfort, the increasingly familiar sense of ease. And again, notice how it is for you to recognise that there's nothing that you need to do right

now. There's nothing in particular that you need to attend to. And that allows you to have that experience of learning again, revisiting again, getting even more familiar again with your experience of comfort.

And then to notice as you're doing that, how easy it is, what a relief it can be, how refreshing it can be to have put any worries or burdens or troubles, you can just put them aside for the time. And in a moment, not just yet, in a moment, you can get ready to open your eyes and get on with the day, get on with whatever's in front of you, whatever is there to do.

And even before you do that, you might like to begin to anticipate the feeling of energy that can naturally happen when you've been comfortable for a time. And so, you can look forward to being refreshed, being energised and maybe enjoy that and perhaps even be slightly surprised by it, but nevertheless look forward to it.

So, just as soon as you're ready, you could open your eyes and really feel that relief, really feel that sense of invigoration, that sense of energy that you really are ready, and rested and ready for whatever's there.



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