



Sweet Dreams: Sleep Hygiene for those with EHS

By Mary Anne Tierney, RN, MPH, EMRS

What an incredible honor it was for me to be interviewed recently by Lloyd Burrell of Electrosense.com! Below are some of the ideas that I shared on the podcast related to sleep hygiene. These are based on my personal experiences, my decade as a psychiatric nurse working with patients who had severe sleep challenges, my coaching of more than 100 EMF-sensitive clients, and some research by the National Sleep Foundation.

One of the enormous blessings in my early journey with EHS was a long conversation with an EMF scientist who knew the physiology – particularly what wireless radiation does to our nervous system. While he wishes to remain unnamed, his advice to me left a lasting mark on my path to wellness: Besides testing for heavy metals and then slowly detoxing if necessary, ***focus razor-sharp on calming the nervous system - especially through good sleep.***



Sympathetic vs Para-Sympathetic: Fight or Flight vs. the Parachute!

For those with EMF sensitivities, our autonomic nervous system often works in overdrive, particularly the “fight or flight” mode, or sympathetic response. I remember this by thinking about how I need to have *sympathy* on anyone (including myself!) going through acute EMF-related symptoms. Our goal for healing should be to ***focus on the***

nervous system’s opposite mode: the para-sympathetic response – like a parachute to catch us, or the “rest and digest” mode. This allows all the systems of our body to work more effectively, to feel more joyful, and to sleep well. When we do sleep well – especially for two days in a row – those of us with EHS can be far less reactive to EMF exposures.

Below I have outlined a 3-step process for improving our sleep, including: environmental remediation, routines, and rituals. In steps 2 and 3 below, there are many ideas presented. But to avoid any stress, pick only what works for you.

Step 1: Environmental Remediation to Create a Sleep Sanctuary

Nothing replaces a low-EMF environment that can be measured with reliable EMF meters. While it is easy to get lured into buying various different stones, chips, and pendants that *may* help you feel better, the tests of time have taught us that EMF sensitivities are best healed with ***significant, quantitative changes to create a sleeping environment*** with as close to zero radiation levels as possible – just as Mother Nature intended.

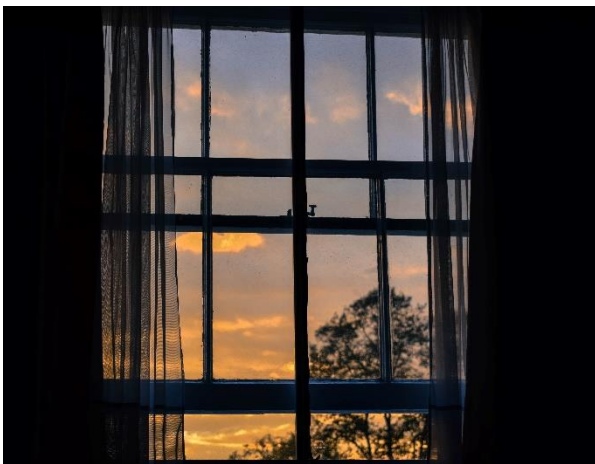
Why? The electric fields from the wiring behind the walls of our bedrooms have been well documented in scientific research to increase the reactivity of our nervous systems, including increasing cortisol, our stress hormone. In order for

our sleep hormone (melatonin) to rise, cortisol must be low. High levels of wireless radiation (like from the cell phone many use as an alarm clock) suppress melatonin production.

This [fact sheet](#) from the Building Biology Institute highlights the steps needed for the physical changes needed for the sleep sanctuary, including turning off the breakers associated with the bedroom, lowering magnetic fields and wireless radiation levels, using a wooden framed mattress without metal. For the specific EMF levels to work towards in our sleeping spaces, see pages 6 and 7 of these [Standards of Building Biology Testing Methods](#)

Step Two: Routines for Sleeping Soundly

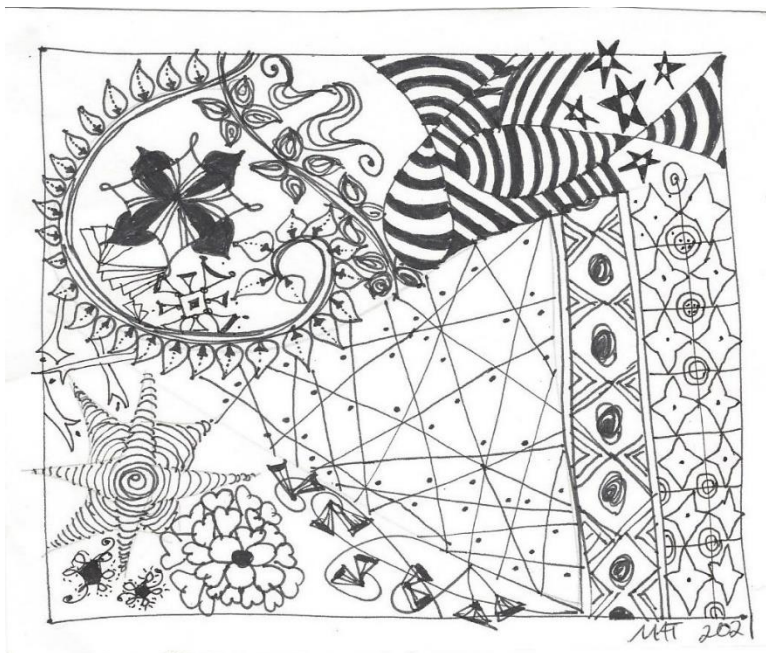
- **Begin in the morning!** Getting full spectrum light exposure early in the day can re-set our internal clock, or circadian rhythm, to know when the day outside is beginning, which then allows the brain to better understand when it should end. Try drinking your morning coffee or tea outside, or sit at window facing east or south.
- Keep to the same or similar time of sleeping and waking. Avoid napping.
- Hydrate up until dinner time, with a goal of half an ounce of water per pound of body weight. After dinner, cut back the hydration to sips to avoid waking at night with a full bladder.
- After dinner: Lower your exposure to light in order to increase melatonin production. (But don't use dimmer switches – which increase dirty electricity. These are easy to have replaced with standard light switches.)
- Wear sleep attire that is cool enough to not to awaken you, especially for peri-menopausal women.
- **Wear socks!** This prevents our sensitive feet from picking up a draft at night. Cotton socks are often the best choice for warmer and moderate climates.



- Allow fresh air to circulate with the window open a crack. This increases exposure to negative ions if not in polluted urban environment. If an air purifier is needed instead, use it with an extension cord from the hallway.
- Consider ending all screen time early. Experiment with how early this needed to be. For me, any screen time after 5:00pm messes with my Monkey Mind.
- Cut caffeine and chocolate as early as necessary. If you have a sweet tooth like me, try carob fudge, sweetened with maple syrup, or a small piece of crystallized ginger, which can help increase circulation to the brain.

Step Three: Rituals for Winding down:

- Use a comfy chair in the bedroom or a low-lit, quiet room, or sit at the edge of your bed. But don't read in the bed while lying down. Allow your brain to associate lying in the bed only with sleep & intimacy.
- Soak your feet in a bucket of warm water and about half a cup of Epson salts (magnesium sulfate) or pure magnesium flakes (magnesium chloride), which some folks find more relaxing and with fewer side effects (like night terrors). Magnesium is well known as calming mineral. It helps to stop the flood of voltage-gated calcium channels affected by EMF exposure. Since magnesium can be difficult to absorb, the feet are an easy route in.
- Consider three things that you are grateful for that occurred today. This can decrease rumination at night and improve our dream content. Ask your Higher Power for any help that you need the following day.
- Taking a personal inventory – like in the 12 Steps: Remind yourself of what you did well today, how you might improve your behavior or attitude tomorrow. Write down anything pressing, so it doesn't keep you awake.
- Engage in right-brain activities that lower brain waves, particularly music in any form: listening, humming, singing, playing an instrument. Pull out your handwork: knitting, crocheting, etc. Just be sure not to *start* new creative projects at bedtime, so that your brain can remain calm and not overstimulated.



- Try a relaxing form of doodling: [Zentangle](#) was created by a former Buddhist monk and his artist wife. It's an easy to learn and relaxing way to create simple yet beautiful images by drawing structured patterns, like found here: [TanglePattern.com](#) has an awesome beginner's guide. My own brain has come to rely on it as a highly effective "sleeping pill" for clearing my Monkey Mind to assure a long and
- Some folks love to journal as a nighttime ritual. If you have PTSD, it can re-traumatize you. Try focusing on writing about what you are grateful for about the day, or a future visualization that to bring into your life.
- Future Visualizations are powerful

means to calm our fears and use the power of our thoughts to create our best life. Consider writing or doodling about some goal you plan to complete, the housing or companion you will find, etc. This can be as simple as doodling stick figures, smiley faces or hearts connected.

Final Ritual of the Night: the Breathing Exercise: 4-7-8: Mindfulness teacher [Dr Lindsay Bridges](#) taught me this after I was challenged with insomnia following a concussion. This exercise is a nightly, priceless tool in my wellness toolkit. After laying down in the bed and getting comfortable:

- Breathe in through your nose while counting to 4.
- Hold your breath while counting to 7.
- Blow out of your mouth while counting to 8.

Do this 10 times. If you mind wanders, re-start the count to ten. It also works very well for getting back to sleep after awakening in the middle of the night.

Thank you for considering these ideas. Wishing you *Sweet Dreams!* Warmly, Mary Anne

P.S. I receive no commissions from any of the products or websites I have noted above. 😊 I wasted way too much time and money in the past on products that did not help. So I only recommend what I know can work.



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