

## Self-Hypnosis to Help with Sleep

1. Lay in bed quietly on your back with your hands at your side.
2. Pick a spot on a wall that is a little bit above your eye level. Stare at the spot. As you do, count slowly to twenty. Notice that in a short while your eyelids begin to feel heavy. Let your eyes close. In fact, even if they don't feel as if they want to close, slowly close them anyway as you get to twenty.
3. Next, take a deep breath, as deep as you can, and very slowly exhale. Repeat the deep breath and slowly exhale three times. With each breath in, feel your chest and belly rise and imagine breathing in peace and calmness. With each breath out, feel your chest and belly relax and blow out all the tension, all the things getting in the way of your relaxation. By this time, you'll notice a calm come over you.
4. Next, tightly squeeze the muscles in your eyelids. Close your eyes as tightly as you can. Then slowly let the muscles in your eyelids relax. Notice how much more they have relaxed. Then imagine that relaxation spreading from the muscles in your eyelids to the muscles in your face down your neck into your shoulders and arms into your chest and throughout the rest of your body. The muscles will take the relaxation cue from your eyelids and relax progressively all the way down to the bottom of your feet.
5. After your whole body feels relaxed, imagine yourself at the top of an escalator. Step on the escalator and ride down, slowly counting backwards from twenty. By the time you reach the bottom, you're likely to feel very relaxed.
6. Then add in guided imagery to enhance the relaxation. In your mind choose a haven that promotes sleep - a place where you feel comfortable, a place that you can imagine with all your senses. I like to go to a mountain cabin, where there is snow outside and a crackling fire in the fireplace. Your haven can be a real or imagined place. It can be anyplace that makes you feel relaxed.
7. Enjoy the imagery for as long as you like, and then allow your mind to drift off to sleep.
8. If sleep does not come right away, keep the imagery in your mind and start counting slowly from 1 to 1,000. In my experience, most people will fall asleep around 300.

### **To make these steps easy to remember, think of the following words:**

- ✓ FOCUS (focus on the spot)
- ✓ BREATHE (slow, deep breaths)
- ✓ RELAX (progressive muscle relaxation)
- ✓ DOWN (ride down the escalator)
- ✓ IMAGERY (experience your haven with all of your senses)
- ✓ COUNT (until you are asleep)

This technique can also be used when you are awake and want to stay that way. After the "imagery" stage, instead of letting your mind drift off to sleep, get back on the escalator, riding up. Count to ten. When you get to ten, open your eyes, feel relaxed, refreshed, and wide awake.

When you do this the first several times, allow yourself plenty of time. Some people become so relaxed that they fall asleep for several minutes. If that happens, don't worry. It's actually a good sign - you're really relaxed!