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3 critical tips for overcoming
the biggest barrier to

FALLING ASLEEP

HOT SHOWER OR BATH

Radically change your environment after an entire day and take a hot shower or bath. The more senses you engage, the better - use scents, play music.

BORING ACTIVITIES

Read a boring book, watch an uninteresting documentary, listen to a monotonous podcast, and pull your attention away from what you are ruminating over.

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Breathing into your belly without your shoulders moving. Typically around 6 breaths per minute. No need to hyperventilate. Focus and prolong the breath out.

TIRED BUT WIRED

The most common reason why we cannot fall asleep is because when we hit the bed, we start ruminating about the past or the future. This is highly typical within high stress/high risk professions where the outcome can be life or death. Regardless of it is something positive or negative (which happens much more often), it keeps us in the "on" mode both body and mind. Why this makes sense is because being in the bed becomes the only time we give ourselves for reflection, but that's exactly what we don't want to have happen as this keeps our "wheels" turning.

To be able to fall asleep easily, we need to tap into our **parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)** and **fully disengage** from the hustle we have experienced, or are about to experience, during the day.

The parasympathetic state is a state of relaxation that allows us to fall asleep better and recover more fully. The opposite is the sympathetic state which gets us moving, thinking, and responding. The parasympathetic neural system is like the brake pedal for our mind and body, while the sympathetic neural system (SNS) is the gas pedal.

No matter how tired we are, if we are in sympathetic neural system, we won't fall asleep. The key to falling asleep is to shift from SNS to PNS and trigger our body and mind to realizing it's the right time to turn off all lights and sirens (decreasing our arousal and tapping into PNS).

When you take a **hot shower or bath**, your blood rises closer to the surface of your skin. This makes it easier to release heat and actually lower your body temperature once you're out of the bath. It also helps put you into a parasympathetic state, pulling you from the hustle of the day, and allows you to daydream, reflect, and apply growth mindset (connecting and engaging).

By engaging your mind with a **boring activity**, you break the cycle of unproductive rumination that keeps you engaged with the hustle/regrets/anxiety that happen when you "do nothing".

80% of neural connections between your belly and your brain lead towards the brain. What this means is that by applying **diaphragmatic breathing** (typical breathing in safe, relaxing state) you directly tap into and engage your parasympathetic neural system. With that, you make your body tell your mind that it's time to switch off and go sleep.

AEE MENTAL PERFORMANCE

(720) 277-9720

aeementalperformance@gmail.com

aeementalperformance.com

Instagram: aee_mental_performance

LinkedIn: AEE Mental Performance

