A Gentle Practice to Wind Down Before Bed with Sara Ivanhoe

Wired at bedtime? Calm your whole body with this set of soothing breathwork and stretches from Sara Ivanhoe.

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Hi, I'm Sara Ivanhoe—yoga director at the University of Southern California where I teach a five-week course on sleep. What I'm going to be teaching you now is a short sequence of gentle movements and breathing techniques to help you wind down at the end of the day and prepare for sleep.

You don't need anything special for this practice. If you want, you can grab a pillow off your bed or off the sofa to sit on. I've got a nice big cushion, but as you can see, I'm not in yoga clothes or even on a yoga mat. You just need a nice, comfortable place where you know you can spread out.

A Gentle Stretch Sequence for Sleep

1. Begin by sitting comfortably—sit up tall and allow your

eyes to close.

2. Take a few deep breaths in and out through your nose.

3. Set your intention to let go of the day, to practice releasing and relaxing on command and giving yourself permission to sleep.

4. Now, please allow your eyes to open and interlace your fingers. Turn the palms of your hands away from you and reach your arms up over your head...and release.

5. Interlace...