

The night-time wind-down

Anxiety at night is anxiety with fewer competitors. The work is on the anxiety, not on the sleeping.

During the day, your mind has work, conversations, and movement to absorb anxious activation. At night, those competitors fall away. **The same anxiety, with less to absorb it, can become more audible.** This worksheet maps the 90 minutes before bed so you and your clinician can see how it builds.

i For anxiety at bedtime, not for sleep itself. If sleep difficulty has been ongoing for months, talk to your GP. This worksheet does not replace a sleep program.

WHAT THIS IS TARGETING

The pre-sleep loop, not the sleep itself.

Researchers describe a state called pre-sleep cognitive arousal: the mental activation that builds in the period before sleep, made up of worry, rumination, and planning (Shaif et al., 2025). For some people with anxiety, it can feed into poorer sleep. The activation has two arms: what the mind is doing, and what the body is doing.

Insomnia and anxiety can feed into each other (Palagini et al., 2024). When the sleep difficulty itself has become its own problem, the work belongs in a structured sleep program. This worksheet targets the earlier piece: the anxiety pattern that runs in the pre-sleep window.

WHAT THIS AUDIT IS FOR

Seeing how the anxiety builds

- Mapping the 90 minutes before bed in 15-minute blocks
- Noticing what your mind and body are doing at each step
- Information for a conversation with your clinician
- One night at a time, several nights across a week

WHAT THIS AUDIT IS NOT

A sleep program or treatment plan

- Not a substitute for CBT-I or other clinical sleep work
- Not a checklist of things you must do before bed
- Not a place to plan or solve while you are filling it in
- Not for tracking sleep duration or quality

HOW TO USE THE AUDIT ON PAGE 2

- 1 Fill in one night**
Pick a night where the wind-down felt loud. Go back through the 90 minutes in 15-minute blocks.
- 2 Three columns per block**
What you were doing, what your mind was doing, what your body was doing. One short note per cell.
- 3 Look for the turn**
Where in the 90 minutes did the mind start, or the body tighten? That moment matters more than the bedtime itself.

FOUR LOOPS TO WATCH FOR IN THE WIND-DOWN

When you read the audit on page 2, these are the patterns that often surface. None of them is a failure of yours; they are recognisable shapes the pre-sleep mind tends to take.

THE PLANNING LOOP

Running through tomorrow

Lists, schedules, conversations that have not happened yet, decisions still to make. The mind treats time in bed as time to organise.

THE REVIEW LOOP

Running through today

Replaying conversations, noticing what you should have said, rehearsing what you wish you had done. Today is processed again.

THE BODY CHECK

Noticing that you are not asleep

Checking the clock, scanning for tension, counting how long you have been awake. The monitoring can become its own source of activation.

THE SCREEN ESCAPE

Reaching for distraction

Scrolling, watching, reading. The screen can interrupt the loop, but can also delay the wind-down and re-activate the mind.

REMEMBER You are mapping the anxiety, not fixing the sleep. Mapping is the work this page is asking for tonight.

Ninety-minute wind-down audit

Work backwards from the moment you turned off the light.

One short note per cell. The point is to see how the loop builds, not to grade the night.

i For anxiety at bedtime, not for sleep itself. Fill in one night where the wind-down felt loud. Three short notes per row.

TIME BEFORE BED	WHAT YOU WERE DOING	WHAT YOUR MIND WAS DOING	WHAT YOUR BODY WAS DOING
EXAMPLE 90 min before bed	dinner cleanup, last work email	tomorrow's meeting kept coming up	still wound up from the day
EXAMPLE 75 min before bed	watched an episode with partner	half-following, half-planning	shoulders dropping a bit
EXAMPLE 60 min before bed	showered, prepped clothes for tomorrow	list-making, re-planning the morning	tension came back
EXAMPLE 45 min before bed	scrolling on the phone in bed	comparison, news, rabbit holes	eyes tired but brain awake
EXAMPLE 30 min before bed	tried to read a chapter	kept drifting to the meeting	heart rate up, jaw clenched
EXAMPLE 15 min before bed	lights off, eyes closed	rehearsing the meeting again	couldn't stop fidgeting
90 min before bed			
75 min before bed			
60 min before bed			
45 min before bed			
30 min before bed			
15 min before bed			
Lights off in bed			

WHEN THE AUDIT IS FILLED IN

Bring it to a session. The pattern matters more than any one night.

Fill in several nights over a week if you can. The repeated shape, not the worst night, is the useful information. If you have not booked yet, the Meet and Greet is a short call to see if we are the right fit.

MEET AND GREET

Free
15 minutes
Online or in-person
No obligation