Relax: Calming Exercises to Help You Sleep

Try doing the following exercises to calm your body and mind before bed. They can also be used throughout the day as great stress relievers!

Relaxing the Body
1. Sit in a cross-legged position with your hands resting on your knees and your eyes gently closed.
2. Think about relaxing each part of your body, including your forehead, eyes, jaw, neck, shoulders, hips, and legs.
3. Breathe in and on the exhale tilt your head towards your chin. On the next exhale, lift your head towards the ceiling. On the next, tilt to the right. Finally, tilt to the left on the next exhale. Rotate your head in slow circles, twice in one direction and twice in the other. Make sure you keep breathing!
4. Place your hands on your shoulders and rotate them in three forward circles and three reverse circles. Think about sitting tall as you do this and breathe slowly with each rotation.

Focus on the Breath
1. Sit tall and breathe through your nose with your eyes closed. Think about expanding the abdomen with each inhale and letting it shrink back down with each exhale. Make each exhale twice as long as each inhale (8:4 count ratio). Breathe like this for about a minute.
2. Cover your right nostril and just breathe through the left nostril, which is said to be calming. Breathe like this for another minute.
3. Imagine your breath flowing to any part of your body that needs special attention. For example, if you have an injury, envision your breath going there! Imagine toxins leaving your body with each exhale.

Lying-Down Release
1. Lie on your back with your hands at your sides, facing up, and your eyes closed. Relax each part of your body. Again imagine your breath flowing through your body.
2. Come up with a short mantra to repeat to yourself on each inhale and exhale. Try “sleep,” “peace,” “love myself,” or anything else that is meaningful to you. This will help you focus on your breathing and on letting go of the day.
3. When you are ready to end your meditation, be sure to stretch slowly.

Sources:
DeBurton, C. The Yoga Room: Ann Arbor, MI