

Eye & Vestibular Exercise for Sleep

Created by Dr. Lynn Margolies ([Visit Website](#))

This brief eye-movement and vestibular exercise is designed to help calm the nervous system and support the transition into sleep.

You can do this to help fall asleep and/or in the middle of the night to help get back to sleep, along with breathing exercises. [Breathing Tool](#)

Instructions

Keep your eyes closed for the entire exercise. Move slowly and gently.

1. With eyes closed, move your eyes slowly from side to side.
Note: This exercise is **NOT EMDR**.
 2. With eyes still closed, look upward.
 3. With eyes still closed, look downward.
 4. With eyes closed, roll your eyes to the left (counter-clockwise).
 5. With eyes closed, roll your eyes to the right (clockwise).
 6. With eyes closed, gently try to cross your eyes by attempting to look toward the bridge of your nose.
 7. As you do this, take a **long, slow exhale**, emptying your lungs.
 8. Repeat the sequence once or twice if it feels calming.
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Why This Exercise Can Help

- **Supports vagal activation:** Gentle eye movements can stimulate pathways associated with the vagus nerve, helping shift the body from a stress-based (sympathetic) state toward a rest-and-digest (parasympathetic) state.
- **Engages the vestibular system:** These movements influence how the brain senses body position, which can help the body let go of posture—an important prerequisite for falling asleep.
- **Reduces cognitive monitoring:** Simple, repetitive eye movements provide a low-effort focus that can interrupt rumination and body-scanning.
- **Mimics soothing motion:** Slow bilateral movements resemble calming experiences such as rocking, which naturally reduce arousal.

- **Facilitates sleep-related brain patterns:** Closed-eye movements resemble aspects of sleep-related eye activity and may help ease the transition from wakefulness toward sleep.

Adapted from Huberman (2025).

Reference:

Huberman Lab. *Matt Abrahams: How to Speak Clearly & With Confidence* (November 19, 2025). HubermanLab.com

Safety Note

Perform gently and stop if discomfort or dizziness occurs. Individuals with seizure disorders, vestibular conditions, recent concussion, or neurological concerns should consult a healthcare professional before use. This tool is not a substitute for medical or mental health care.

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