

# Frame Tracing to Achieve Sleep

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Often in the process of trying to sleep, ideas and images pass through the mind in an endless parade, sometimes over and over – racing thoughts, whether of a worrying nature or of a creative kind. They go off in many directions, and the resulting stimulation prevents sleep.

Although we do not perceive such thoughts as stimulation, they are indeed. Sleep specialists recommend “*relaxation*” to aid sleep. But, how does one achieve “*relaxation*”? Certainly, not by wishing for it.

Frame-tracing leads to sleep by achieving complete distraction. If the user will maintain the process diligently for 15 minutes, uninterrupted, he WILL fall asleep, provided that pain and poor **Sleep Hygiene** (addressed below) are not present.

The author has used the method successfully for 25 years. In 25 years, it has failed only a score of times, when he was preparing for a demanding public presentation the next day.

Frame-tracing is an advanced form of sheep-counting, whose goal is also distraction. But frame-tracing is superior, because there is no sequential count (which can become discouragingly long), and because more faculties become occupied – eye-movement, mental-thought, voice and physical motion are engaged in frame-tracing.

## Frame Tracing

First, the process; then more on other important factors. Frame-tracing has 4 components, all of which should be undertaken simultaneously.

1. **The frame.** With eyes closed select a 4-sided frame, which is before you, and begin to trace it with a ball, by moving the ball from corner to corner consistently, in either a clockwise or a counterclockwise direction (see the example, next page). The frame can be a real object, like a window, a picture on the wall, a dresser or other frame – or an imaginary object, like a pine tree or a baseball diamond. See next page. Visualize home-plate and the three bases, as you move from one base to another to another.
2. **The moving object.** Try to concentrate on the ball, which could be a baseball or golf ball. Visualize details of the ball as it moves; for example, look at the stitching of the baseball or the pox of the golf ball.
3. **Body motion.** At each corner of the frame tap your finger against the pillow or bed, or, as an alternative, rotate your wrist or ankle slightly. The tapping of the finger will set a cadence, which you can hear through the bedding. The rhythm will keep you concentrated on the tasks; it will also contribute to the goal of distraction.

4. **Mantra.** At each corner repeat the same word or phrase, inaudibly. The phrase might be *“I’m relaxed”* or *“I’m comfortable”* or, if you’re religious, *“help me”* – any non-alarming phrase or word. The ongoing mantra will create another level of distraction.

By employing these multiple tasks, you will avoid persistent thought-processing, will become distracted, and will soon fall asleep. When you awaken, the last thing you will remember is the tracing.

## 15 Minutes; Don’t Give Up

At times, you will be aware of the whole-body jolt, called hypnagogic or myoclonic-jerk, which precedes sleep-onset only in humans – meaning that you’re on the right path to sleep.

You might try this sleep technique, but give up after a short time. Do not be discouraged; continue the technique nonstop for at least 15 minutes. The alternative is your entrapment by never-ending, relentless thoughts (stimulation), leading to wakefulness. Even though the sleep-depriving thoughts might be a fun trip to the mountains or the clever solution to a problem at work, they will NOT yield sleep.

Remember, DISTRACTION is the key. Do NOT substitute a pleasant scene for the frame; the “pleasant” scene will soon evolve into another scene and another, and distraction will be lost. The essential truth is that the process, to be successful, MUST be boring, not interesting. The sooner you stick to the frame-tracing pattern, the sooner you will be asleep.



### Summary: Using a baseball diamond:

Any frame having 4 corners can be used. Here a baseball travels to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd bases, then back to Home. As you picture the ball moving from base to base, silently name its position, so that “1-2-3-Home” describes a complete cycle.

Also, try picturing the stitches on the ball. And, rotate a hand, foot or limb slightly, or tap a finger, as the ball reaches the next base. If helpful, in place of the pattern “1-2-3-Home”, substitute something like “I’m relaxed” when the ball arrives at each base. Continue, nonstop, for 15 minutes, and sleep will occur.

Any 4-cornered rectangular object can be used for the frame: A bedroom window, a dresser or a picture on the wall, envisioned with eyes closed.

## Sleep Hygiene

Now, what else needs to be done? All **Sleep Hygiene** factors must be adjusted to aid sleep. The **Sleep Hygiene** factors are:

- a. **Sleep Environment.** The bedroom must be dark, quiet and comfortable. If there is disrupting noise, control it, or mask it using a white-noise generator. Unfortunately, Radio Shack's excellent model 63-646 is no longer available. Many hospitals will allow a white-noise generator in your room.

If there is too much light, use black-out drapes or black plastic trash bags taped over the windows. It is difficult to estimate how much these factors are affecting you, so they must be addressed regardless.

- b. **Caffeine and stimulants.** Eliminate all caffeine from your diet – forever. That means none, no matter how distant it is taken from your bedtime. There must be complete elimination. There is no daily dietary requirement for caffeine. If you cannot quit, that means that you are addicted.

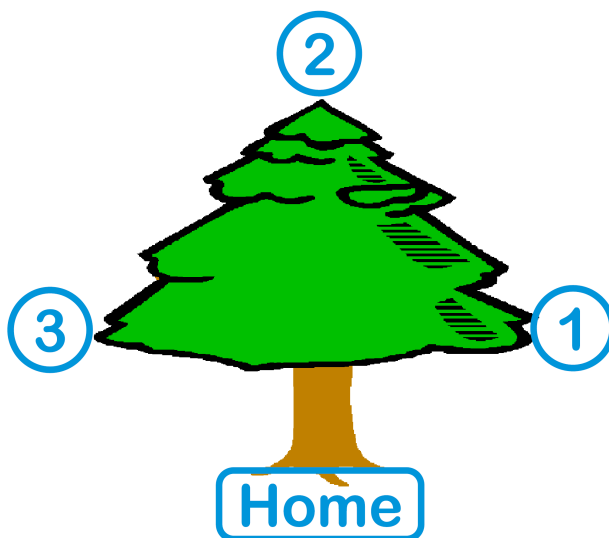
It will take several weeks to complete the caffeine withdrawal. You will not know its effect on you until the withdrawal is over. If you won't quit, then you are not willing to go to any lengths to sleep.

In addition, you must abstain from onions, peppers, and other stomach-upsetting spices. They can have sleep-disrupting effects which cannot be predicted, until days after they are removed from the diet.

- c. **Bedtime.** Go to bed early, before 9pm. The more restful sleep occurs early in the evening. It is a fallacy that staying up late will make you more tired and thus promote better sleep. Early bedtime also reduces the subconscious anxiety that there is insufficient sleep opportunity before dawn.

And, a regular pattern of bedtimes and awakenings is a must. A bedtime of 1am one night, and 10pm the next, is very unwise.

- d. **Exercise.** If you awaken mid-night, and cannot go back to sleep,



### Summary: Example using a pine tree:

Any frame having 4 corners can be used. Here, the eye travels from **Point-1**, to **Point-2**, to **Point-3**, then to **Home**.

As you move from point to point, silently name its position, so that "1-2-3-Home" describes a complete cycle. Also, rotate a hand, foot or limb slightly, or tap a finger, as the eye reaches the next point. Continue, nonstop, for 15 minutes, and sleep will occur.

Any 4-cornered, rectangular object can be used for the frame: A bedroom window, a dresser or a picture on the wall, all envisioned with the eyes closed.

try bringing yourself to full wakefulness. Often an immediate return to bed, without exercise, results in a non-restful half-sleep. Once awake, try moderate exercise (perhaps 100 deep knee-bends), then return to bed and read 10 minutes of escapist, relaxing literature, followed by frame-tracing. The knee-bends will reduce aching in the legs. Full wakefulness works for some people, but not for all.

If a difficult event is expected the next day, go to bed earlier: 8pm or earlier, if necessary. If shift-work is depriving you of sleep, give it up. If you place value on sleep and the good emotions and performance which result, you will be determined to pay the necessary price for consistent, restful sleep – you will be willing to go to any lengths.

- e. **Depressants.** Do not use alcohol or sleep-medications to sleep – never. And, do not take alcohol sooner than 8 hours before bedtime.
- f. **Sleep disorders.** There are serious sleep disorders which lead to sleep deficiency (although they may not affect the onset of sleep). Sleep apnea and UARS (Upper Airway Resistance Syndrome) are relatively common disorders, which may be described by a bed partner as a “*gasping for breath*” or snorting. Because of resultant oxygen deprivation, sleep apnea can cause high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke. A sleep study, performed in a medical sleep lab, is needed for diagnosis. Also, there is less-precise at-home diagnostic equipment.

## Get Motivated

As you know, the brain does not rattle around in the head, disconnected from the body. If you do not sleep well, you will not feel well, and your capacities for thought and action will be diminished.

If you're trying to get yourself willing to adopt these practices, ask yourself, “*To what lengths am I willing to go in order to sleep?*” If you answer “*any length*”, then you are now willing to take these steps.

If you are not willing to do these things, continue to suffer until you become more willing.