



The Better Sleep Programme for Caregivers
Week 6 Handout
Putting It All Together

This handout brings together the key learning from Weeks 1-5 and helps you decide what you want to keep practising next. You might like to use it as a gentle reminder sheet, and return to it when sleep becomes difficult again.

Today's session

We will:

- Check in
- Revisit Weeks 1–5 (sleep, light, routine, activity, behaviour, thoughts)
- Review relaxation tools
- Identify what worked and what didn't (without judgement)
- Make a realistic plan for the weeks ahead
- Check out and say goodbye

Week 1 – Sleep & Dementia: what we learned

- Sleep is an active brain process that supports physical and emotional health
- Sleep is often disrupted in dementia (body clock changes, confusion on waking, reduced melatonin, health factors)
- Caring stress can worsen sleep (tired but wired)
- Mindfulness can help regulate stress
- Stimulus control strengthens the link between bed and sleep

Week 1 tools to remember

- If you can't sleep after about 15–20 minutes, get up and do something calm in dim light
- Only go to bed when sleepy
- Bed is for sleep (and intimacy), not worry or planning
- Keep wake-up time steady
- Avoid long or late naps

Reflection (optional):

What worked best from Week 1?

Did sleep change at all?

Week 2 – Routine, Light & the Body Clock

- Routine supports the sleep-wake cycle and reduces stress load
- Light is the strongest signal for the body clock
- Dementia can disrupt circadian rhythms
- Morning light + dim evenings can help “reset” rhythms
- Small routines can support your relative and reduce night distress

Week 2 tools to remember

- Get morning daylight (outside if possible, or near a bright window)
- Dim lights in the evening (soft lighting, reduce screens if possible)
- Keep wake time, meals, and bedtime routine roughly consistent
- A simple home plan is enough — perfection isn't required

Reflection:

What element helped most (light / routine / evening cues)?

What made changes difficult?

Week 3 – Sleep & Activity Levels

- Daytime activity builds healthy sleep drive and supports the body clock
- Gentle movement improves energy, mood, and night-time sleep quality
- Relaxation tools reduce stress and support rest
- Small planned activities create structure and resilience
- Plan for real life: good-day and low-energy day options

Week 3 tools to remember

- Wake at roughly the same time
- Plan morning + afternoon activity (even small)
- Get natural light early
- Keep naps short and early if needed
- Avoid long periods lying down during the day
- Keep an evening wind-down that contrasts with daytime activity
- Consistency over intensity
- Use reminders and link habits to existing routines

Reflection:

Which daytime change helped most?

What felt most realistic to keep doing?

Relaxation – What worked?

We tried and practised:

- Signal Breath (quick nervous system reset)
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
- Guided Imagery
- Stretching for Stress
- Compassionate Thoughts (a kinder inner voice)

Reflection:

Which relaxation technique helped most?

Did you use any of these with your relative? What happened?

Week 4 – Troubleshooting Sleep Plans

- Troubleshooting is trial and error - change often takes time
- Curiosity helps (instead of judgement): “*What might be driving this?*”
- Triggers matter: what happens before the behaviour often explains it

- We can change outcomes by changing environment, routine, and response
- Behaviour records + sleep diaries help you see patterns and test strategies

Week 4 tools to remember

- Identify one target behaviour
- Look for triggers and patterns
- Try one change at a time
- Track what happens (briefly)
- Repeat and refine

Reflection:

Did behaviour recording help you notice patterns?

What change was most useful?

Week 5 – Thoughts, Feelings & Self-Care

- Sleep is shaped by behaviour and by what the mind does at night
- Unhelpful sleep thoughts are common — especially in carers

- Reframing thoughts reduces threat and pressure (making sleep more likely)
- Thought records help you practise a calmer, more realistic perspective
- Pleasant events matter: small moments of “me-time” protect wellbeing

Week 5 tools to remember

- Sleep Compression can improve time-in-bed efficiency (gradually)
- Use a simple Thought Record when stress spikes
- Pleasant events can be tiny and still powerful
- Caring for yourself supports caring capacity

Reflection:

Did challenging thoughts become easier over time?

Which self-care or pleasant event helped most?

What works for you? (Your personal toolkit)

Below are the strategies from the course. Tick what you want to keep.

Night-time / sleep tools

- Stimulus control (get up after 15–20 mins)
 - A calm night-time activity list
 - Consistent wake time
- Sleep Compression (if appropriate)
 - Reduce evening light/screens

Daytime tools

- Morning light
- Daily movement (walk / chair exercises / stretching)
 - Planned activity (purpose + social contact)
 - Short, early naps only if needed

Stress + mind tools

- Signal Breath
 - PMR
- Guided imagery
- Stretching for stress
- Thought record / reframing
- Compassionate thoughts

Keeping it going: a simple plan

You don't need to do everything. Choose 2–3 anchors and keep them steady.

My 3 anchors for the next two weeks

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If sleep gets worse again, I will return to...

- Sleep diary for a week
 - Behaviour record for 2–3 incidents
 - Night-time plan sheet
 - Light and routine plan
 - One relaxation tool daily
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How do you feel compared to the start of the course?

A few words (optional):

A closing reminder

Small changes really do add up. Even when nights are still difficult, every time you practise a calmer response, a steadier routine, or a kinder thought, you are strengthening a new pathway.

Thank you for being part of this programme. We hope you leave with tools that feel usable, human, and supportive - for you and for the person you care for.

With warm wishes,
The Mindful Life Group Team