

Touching Your Heart Calming Mini-Move #6: page 227 The
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THE INSOMNIA SOLUTION

The Natural, Drug-Free Way to a Good Night's Sleep

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WARNER BOOKS

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Chapter 4 Calming Mini-Move #6: Touching Your Heart

Terry was the nervous type. At the time of our first meeting, my office was being painted, so I had rented a small treatment room at TRS, a suite of commercial offices on the East Side. Our appointment was my first of the day, at 9:00 a.m. I arrived at 8:50 to find Terry in an altercation with the receptionist. It seems he had presented himself for a nine o'clock appointment with me and had been informed that that was impossible because no room was booked in my name until 9:30. He had become very agitated.

He was on a tight schedule, and a half-hour delay was not acceptable to him. And he had let everyone around him know it! His face was bright red, his breath was quick and shallow, and he compulsively clenched and unclenched his right hand—all physiological signs of stress and anxiety.

It took me only a minute to sort things out with the TRS staff. They had made a mistake and were only too happy to give us a much larger room usually reserved for meetings and workshops.

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There was no problem. In fact, we were far more comfortable than we would have been without the mistake. Our session began at 9:01.

I asked Terry if he was satisfied with the way he had handled the situation. He admitted that it wasn't his best moment. It seemed that he was in the habit of "going off," as he termed it. The smallest little glitch would send him into a tizzy—a cab that

didn't stop for him, a meeting that went overtime, a delivery man who brought the wrong take-out order-and he'd become anxious and combative. He worked in the computer department of a large law firm, and he had been cited for his outbursts there.

We spent the rest of our session reenacting several situations that had triggered Terry in the past, starting with the most recent example that morning. In each case, I asked Terry to try to catch himself at the tipping point, where he was just on the verge of going off. At that moment, I asked him to bring his hand to his heart and for sixty seconds to just feel the warmth there. Each time we got to the tipping point, I could see Terry's ears start to redden and his breath start to accelerate. Then, at first with my prompting, and later on his own, he'd bring his hand to his heart and the process would come to a halt. Within a minute, he was calm and could address the situation in a more dispassionate way.

Terry understood immediately that this was a way to interrupt his habitual stress response. He was quite pleased with the results of our experiments. Later that day, he was tested under battlefield conditions. His supervisor criticized some code he had written and he caught himself at the moment he was starting to go off.

"Right there in front of my supervisor, I put my hand on my heart," Terry reported, "and I felt calm." Then he chuckled. "You know what? It turned out I didn't even write that code. It was

written by a guy who left the company months ago!" Terry became very adept at couching his heart in a variety of situations. His life became easier as a result. He began to enjoy it.

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This Mini-Move is simple and delightful. Over time, it cultivates a feeling of inner peace, plus greater compassion for yourself and others. Lee's hope it's contagious!

TOUCH YOUR HEART.

Place the center of the palm of one of your hands over the center of your chest.

Step 1. Touch your heart. Sit, stand, or lie down in any comfortable position. Place the center of the palm of one of your hands over the center of your chest. Find the warmest spot there.

Seep 2. Feel. Feel the warmth of your hand as it meets the warmth of your heart. At first, it may take a moment or two for you to begin to feel it. Don't worry, it gets easier with practice. Don't hurry. Close your eyes if you like. Breathe easy.

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- Which is warmer, your hand or your heart? Allow your heart to warm your hand and your hand to warm your heart.
- Each time you inhale, your chest rises and expands and your hand rises with your chest. Each time you exhale, your chest

- sinks and your hand sinks with it. Allow your hand to ride up and down with the gentle rising and falling of your chest.
- Continue touching your heart for several complete breath cycles.

Seep 3. Stop, rest, and feel. Lower your hand and rest a moment. Don't hurry. Take all the time you need for each breath. Can you still feel the warmth there, in your chest?

Seep 4. Switch hands. Try the same thing with the other hand. Simply couch your heart. Again, try to align the center of your palm with the warmest spot on your chest. Continue like chat for as long as you like.

TOUCH YOUR HEART WITH BOTH HANDS.

Place one hand over your heart, and the other hand on top of it. When the centers of both palms are aligned over the warmest spot on your chest, you will feel a core of warmth projecting rom your bands, deep into the center of your chest.



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Step 5. Touch your heart with both hands. Place one hand over your heart and the other hand on top of it. When the centers of both palms are aligned over the warmest spot on

your chest, you will feel a core of warmth projecting from your hands, deep into the center of your chest.

Make no effort. Breathe easy, and allow your hands to ride up and down with the gentle rising and falling of your breath.

Stop, rest, and feel.

Step 6. Touch your heart with a smile. Touch your heart with one or both hands, whichever you prefer. Allow your hands to ride up and down with the rising and falling of your breath. Now each time you slowly inhale, think a smile. Each time you exhale, relax. Continue for several breath cycles. It doesn't hurt, does it?

Step 7. Circulate your smile. Now, your lips aren't the only part of you that can smile. If there is some part of you that needs special care, you can send the image and the feeling of your smile there. It could be your stomach, your liver, your lungs, or your intestines. It could be your throat, your lower back, your head, or anywhere. You can circulate your smile around inside yourself, wherever you feel the need. Slowly inhale, and send your smile there. Slowly exhale, relax. You can concentrate on one area, or let your smile circulate all around your body.

Application. You can practice touching your heart anytime. You don't have to do all the steps every time. Sometimes just raising one hand to your heart for a brief moment is all it takes.

That connects you to your inner self and to others, heart to heart. What more effective stress reducer could there be?