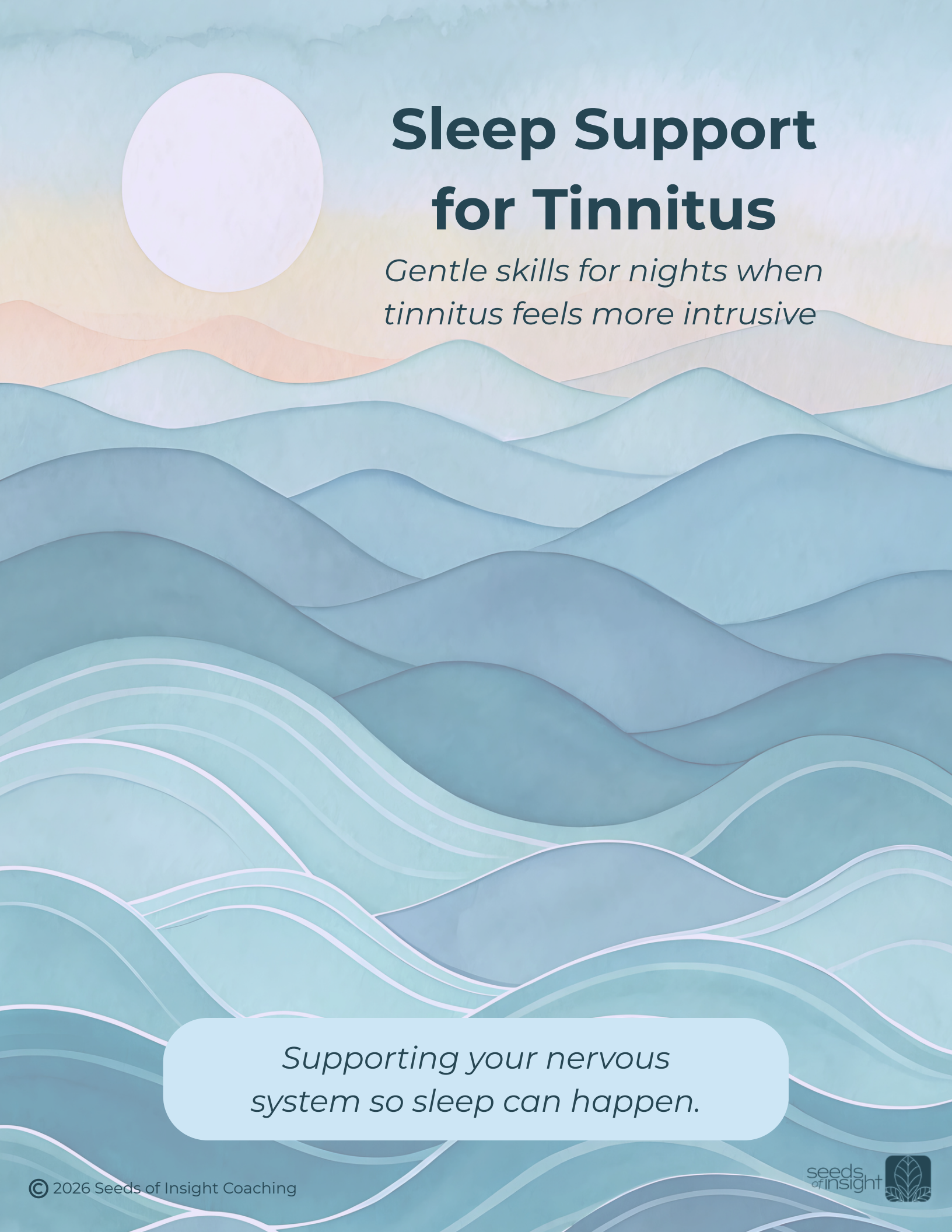


The background features a soft, painterly illustration of a sunset or sunrise. A large, pale yellow sun is positioned in the upper left corner. The sky transitions from a warm orange near the horizon to a light blue at the top. Below the sky are rolling hills in shades of light blue and green. The foreground is dominated by stylized, layered waves in various shades of blue and teal, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Sleep Support for Tinnitus

*Gentle skills for nights when
tinnitus feels more intrusive*

*Supporting your nervous
system so sleep can happen.*

Sleep Is a Biological Need

Sleep is a biological need, much like hunger or thirst. Your body has to have it in order to survive. Sleep happens automatically and it is not something you can force.

It's something your body allows when conditions feel safe.. But sleep is when we are also at our most vulnerable. When the brain hears tinnitus, it may want to stay more alert and monitor that sound in an effort to keep you safe. It makes sense then, that sleep can often be quite problematic when the world gets quiet and the distractions are fewer. For many, this is when tinnitus feels worse.

You might be trying to force sleep. Unfortunately, this doesn't work.

When you try to make sleep happen:

- Your brain starts checking
- Your body becomes more alert
- Pressure increases
- Sleep becomes harder

This is very common with tinnitus. Think of it like watching and waiting for water to boil or the hands of a clock to move.

Instead of trying to sleep, shift the goal:
Focus on resting. Let sleep follow.

Your body already knows how to sleep.
You just need to reduce the pressure.

Using Sound to Support Rest

Using sound can support sleep when tinnitus feels like it is interfering. Using some background sound, soothing sound or a combination of the two can help reduce tinnitus monitoring.

When it is very quiet, it is easier to notice the tinnitus because your brain doesn't have any other options to focus on. It can feel a little like a spotlight on the tinnitus. Think about sound from taking the environment from the stark contrast of black and white to one full of grey tones.



You can soften the spotlight by introducing some sound into the room via soft bluetooth headbands, a speaker next to the bed or simply a fan or noise machine. Strike a balance between the volume giving some relief but do not cover the tinnitus sound completely.

Choose something neutral and/or soothing,
Let it sit in the background while you rest.

Try:

- soft rain
- fan noise
- distant waves
- quiet ambient sound
- gentle music

Gentle soothing background sound gives your brain:

- something else to process
- less contrast
- less monitoring

**The goal is not to mask tinnitus.
The goal is to reduce attention on it.**

Give Your Brain a Gentle Task

Quiet the mind without forcing sleep. It is pretty common for the mind to race as we lay down to rest. Our brains are so busy! But at night, if you don't give it something to do or think about it often chooses tinnitus.

The idea here to give your brain something engaging enough to keep it busy, but not so interesting that it has to work hard to concentrate. There are a number of different ideas to do this, but the following is a favorite. "Cognitive shuffling is a mental technique designed to help you fall asleep by jumbling your thoughts in a way that distracts your brain from stress and worry," says Pittsburgh-based licensed clinical psychologist Leah Kaylor, PhD, author of *If Sleep Were a Drug*.

Cognitive Shuffling

Cognitive shuffling gives your mind a neutral task.

Pick a neutral word.
Use each letter of the word to name as many unrelated items as you can.
No need for them to be related, just stream of consciousness. When you run out, move the the next letter.

Example: CURTAIN
Name items for each letter:
C – cat, car, couch
U – umbrella, uniform
R – rain, rabbit
T – table, towel
A – apple, anchor
I – island, ice
N – notebook, napkin

This keeps your mind occupied without stimulating it.
Sleep often follows naturally.

Settle the Body (Without Forcing Sleep)

Lower alertness, not force relaxation
Your body sleeps more easily when alertness decreases.
You don't need to relax perfectly.

Just soften a little.

- Try:
- dropping your shoulders
 - unclenching your jaw
 - softening your forehead
 - feeling the support to your body in the bed

Use your breath to access the Rest and Reset part of your nervous system. It is one of the fastest ways to support yourself in feeling more calm and relaxed.

Extended Exhale

Focus on a longer exhale than inhale. Longer exhales signal safety to your nervous system.

Count to 4 beats while inhaling through the nose.
On the exhale through the mouth, count to 6 or 8 beats.
It is ok when your mind wanders. This is normal. You didn't do anything wrong. Simply return to counting the breaths.

You could also add in a supportive phrase.

Inhale - I don't need *Inhale - It's ok*
Exhale - To sleep to rest *Exhale - To be awake*

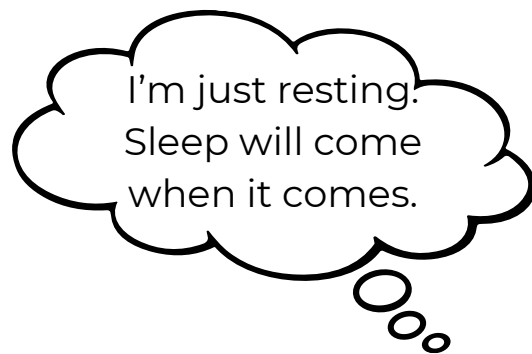
Rest Is Still Helpful

You don't need to sleep right away. Rest still helps your nervous system, even when sleep feels far away.

Even if you're awake:

- your body is restoring
- your brain is settling
- alertness is decreasing

Sometimes sleep comes after you stop trying.



Shift the goal:

Take the pressure off.
Let your body do what it
already knows how to do.



When tinnitus is louder at night:

- Add gentle sound
- Give your mind a neutral task
- Soften your body
- Focus on resting
- *Let sleep follow*