

## **Afternoon Naps & Overwhelm - Supporting your brain when sleep is disrupted**

### Why naps can help

When the brain is overwhelmed and sleep has been disrupted, it can struggle to regulate emotions, think clearly, and feel calm. A short nap can help it reset, rebalance, and cope more effectively.

Research shows that a short nap in the afternoon can help the brain:

- reduce stress and emotional intensity
- improve mood and resilience
- support clearer thinking and focus
- partially compensate for poor night sleep

A nap is not a sign of doing something wrong. It is giving your brain the opportunity to reset.

### What the research shows

- Short naps improve emotional regulation more than simply resting
- Regular napping is linked to better brain health as we age
- Around 30–40 minutes can improve alertness, performance, and recovery after poor sleep
- Naps can support cognitive function, particularly when sleep has been disrupted

### Why this is helpful in midlife and perimenopause and menopause

- sleep is often lighter and more disrupted
- hormonal changes affect mood and stress responses
- the brain can feel more overloaded

This means the brain may need more opportunities to recover during the day.

A short nap can:

- reduce the build up of stress
- support emotional balance
- help the brain reset and process information
- How to use naps effectively
- Aim for 20–40 minutes
- Best time: early afternoon (1–3 pm)
- Keep it short to avoid grogginess (90 mins max)
- Even resting with eyes closed can be helpful

A nap is like pressing pause on an overwhelmed system, giving your brain space to settle and reset.