

## Night-Time Eating Action Plan

*From auto-pilot snacking to calm, conscious evenings.*

### 1. Understand Your Night Cravings (The “Dashboard Light” 🚨)

Think of your evening cravings like warning lights on a car dashboard: they’re signals, not personal failures. They’re often driven by:

- Skipping or under-eating in the day (the “empty fuel tank” effect)
- Stress and high cortisol after a long day (“brain on overdrive”)
- Loneliness, boredom, or emotional overwhelm when things finally go quiet
- Habit loops: couch + Netflix = snack on repeat

👉 Tonight, instead of judging the craving, ask:

“What is this craving *trying* to tell me I need?”

### 2. Daytime Foundations (Fuel the “Engine” 🚗)

**Daily non-negotiables:**

- Eat every 3–4 hours: breakfast, lunch, dinner + 1–2 snacks
- Include **protein** at each meal (eggs, yogurt, beans, tofu, chicken, fish) for steadier blood sugar
- Add fibre and fats (whole grains, veg, nuts, seeds, olive oil) so meals *actually* satisfy

**Example rhythm (adapt as needed):**







- Breakfast: Protein + fibre (e.g. Greek yogurt + berries + oats)
- Lunch: Protein + carbs + veg (e.g. lentil soup + wholegrain toast)
- Mid-afternoon snack: Protein + fibre (e.g. apple + nut butter)
- Dinner: Balanced plate, not “diet dinner”

 *If you drive all day on fumes, your body will “demand a refill” at night — often loudly.*

### 3. Your Evening “Calm Ritual” (Switch Off, Not Snack On 🌙)

Design a simple 30–60 minute wind-down routine so food isn’t your only “off switch.”

Pick 3–5 of these and stack them like a mini-evening ritual:

-  Make a warm herbal tea
-  Dim the lights and close the kitchen (e.g. lights off at 9 pm)
-  Warm shower or bath
-  10–15 minutes of reading (non-stressful content)
-  5 slow breaths in, 7 out (repeat 5–10 times)
-  5-minute “brain dump” journaling (3 worries, 3 wins)

*This is like landing a plane gently instead of slamming the brakes at the last second.*

### 4. The 5-Step Night Craving Script (Use In The Moment )

When a craving hits, walk through this script. It’s not about saying “no” to food; it’s about saying “yes” to *you*.

#### **1** Pause 2 minutes

- Put the food down, set a 2-minute timer.
- Place a hand on your chest or belly and just breathe.

#### **2** Name it

- Ask: “Is this stomach hunger or heart/mind hunger?”
  - Stomach hunger: gradual, physical, open to different foods.
  - Heart/mind hunger: sudden, specific, often linked to emotion.

### 3 Check today's fuel

- Did I eat at least 3 meals and 1–2 snacks today?
  - If **no** → It's likely under-fueling; a snack may be appropriate.
  - If **yes** → It may be emotional, habit, or tiredness.

### 4 Choose your path (A or B):

#### Path A – I'm genuinely hungry

- Have a planned, satisfying snack (see Section 5).
- Sit down, put the portion on a plate, eat slowly and mindfully.

#### Path B – It feels emotional / habitual

- Pick one non-food comfort from Section 6 first.
- Tell yourself: "I can still choose to eat after this if I want to."

### 5 Reflect, not regret

- Afterward, ask: "What did I *actually* need in that moment?"
- Note it down (see mini-log below). This turns "slips" into information, not evidence you've failed.

## 5. Planned Night Snack Menu (If You Choose To Eat 🍽️)

Sometimes a calm, intentional snack is the most supportive option.

Aim for: protein + fibre or protein + fat for satisfaction.

#### ✅ Ideas (pick 1):

- Greek yogurt + berries + sprinkle of oats
- Apple or pear + 1–2 tbsp nut butter
- Wholegrain toast + cottage cheese or hummus
- Small handful of nuts + a piece of fruit

- Oatmeal made with milk, topped with seeds

Set a pre-decided portion, sit at a table, no multitasking (no phones/TV if possible).

## 6. Non-Food Comfort Menu (For Heart/Mind Hunger 🧡)

Build a “comfort toolbox” so food isn’t your only emotional life raft.

Choose 3–5 favourites and keep this list visible in your kitchen or bedroom:

- 🛋️ Cozy: Warm blanket, soft pyjamas, hot water bottle
- 🎧 Soothe: Calming playlist, short podcast, sound bath
- 📝 Express: 5-minute journal – “Right now I feel... I really need...”
- ☎️ Connect: Message or call a safe person
- 🚶 Move: 5–10 minute slow walk around the flat or gentle stretches
- 🧘 Regulate: Box breathing (inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4)

*These are different “channels on the remote” when your brain instinctively switches to the food channel.*

## 7. Sleep Support Plan (Because Tired Brains Crave Sugar 😴)

Poor sleep increases hunger and cravings and makes it harder to make aligned choices.

**Tonight’s sleep check-in:**

- Aim for roughly 7–9 hours where possible
- Set a consistent “screens off” time 30 minutes before bed
- Pair your calm ritual (Section 3) with a fixed bedtime window

*Sleep is your overnight “software update” — without it, all your other efforts lag.*

## 8. One-Week Night-Time Log (Tiny Data, Big Clarity )

Use this mini-log for 5–7 nights to spot patterns and triggers. Use this as a compassionate curiosity exercise, not a report card.

Night	Time of craving	What happened just before?	Hunger (0–10)	Emotion(s)	What I chose (food / tool / both)	How I felt after
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

## 9. Self-Talk Upgrade (From Food Police To Kind Coach )

When things don't go as planned:

- Instead of: “I’ve ruined everything.”
- Try: “Something felt really hard tonight. What did I need that I didn’t get?”

A gentle, coaching inner voice makes change more sustainable than harsh criticism.

## 10. When To Seek Extra Support 🤝

Reach out to a professional if:

- Night-time eating feels frequent, intense, or out of control
- You often eat large amounts very quickly and feel distressed afterward
- You suspect Binge Eating Disorder or Night Eating Syndrome

*You deserve support ❤️ that meets you where you are, not another rigid rulebook.*