

# Sleep as Sacred Practice

*A 4-Week Experiential Course*

Amelia Barili • OLLI at UC Berkeley

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## Course Vision

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Sleep is far more than rest for the body. It is a nightly invitation to enter a space of deep healing, regeneration, and wholeness. In these turbulent times, anxiety, worry, and the relentless pace of modern life rob us of this sacred gateway — and with it, our energy, clarity, and inner peace.

This course offers a different path. Drawing on ancient somatic wisdom traditions and illuminated by contemporary neuroscience, we will learn to prepare body, mind, and spirit for truly restorative sleep — and to carry that peace into our waking lives, our relationships, and our communities.

## What You Will Experience

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- **Three core ancient somatic practices** that you can use every night before sleep and throughout the day
- How to notice where **anxiety lives in the body** — and how to gently, skillfully release it
- The **heart–brain–vagus nerve connection**: how bringing peace to the heart signals safety to the brain, releasing hormones of healing throughout the whole organism
- How consistent practice **protects your telomeres** — the markers of cellular aging — supporting longer health and vitality
- How your inner peace **ripples outward** into your family and community, contributing to collective healing
- Selected findings from **peer-reviewed research** on sleep, cardiovascular health, aging, and neuroplasticity — as background context for our experiential work

## Course Approach

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This is above all an **experiential course**. From the very first session, you will be practicing. Each week builds progressively on the last, guiding you toward a stable, embodied daily practice that is yours to keep.

No prior experience is needed. These practices are **gentle and accessible to everyone** — that is the beauty of ancient wisdom: it was always meant for all of us.

Brief scientific context will be offered each week to enrich understanding, but our primary focus will always return to the direct **experience of transformation** in body, mind, and spirit.

## Weekly Outline

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<p><b>WEEK 1</b> <i>Opening the Gateway</i></p>	<p><b>Sleep as Sacred Space — Beginning Your 28-Day Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What robs us of sleep: the nervous system under continuous stress</li> <li>• Introduction to the body–mind–spirit continuum and sleep as sacred time</li> <li>• First somatic practice: grounding, releasing the day, entering your healing space</li> <li>• Creating your personal pre-sleep ritual — beginning tonight and every night</li> <li>• Brief science: what happens in the brain and body during deep, restorative sleep</li> </ul>
<p><b>WEEK 2</b> <i>The Body Knows</i></p>	<p><b>Listening to and Releasing Anxiety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locating where anxiety, tension, and worry live in the body</li> <li>• Second somatic practice: embodied release and letting go</li> <li>• The heart–brain–vagus nerve connection: how peace in the heart signals safety to the brain</li> <li>• Deepening your daily practice — Days 8 through 14</li> <li>• Brief science: heart rate variability, the vagus nerve, and healing hormones</li> </ul>
<p><b>WEEK 3</b> <i>The Heart of Practice</i></p>	<p><b>Breath, Stillness &amp; Going Deeper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third somatic practice: breathing in and out from the heart</li> <li>• Weaving all three practices into one flowing nightly sequence</li> <li>• Noticing what is already shifting — in sleep, in energy, in daily life</li> <li>• Continuing and deepening your daily practice — Days 15 through 21</li> <li>• Brief science: telomeres, cellular aging, and the power of consistent practice</li> </ul>
<p><b>WEEK 4</b> <i>Rippling Outward</i></p>	<p><b>Sleep, Vitality &amp; Community Healing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflecting on 28 days: what has shifted in body, mind, and spirit?</li> <li>• How your inner peace radiates to family, friends, and community — one by one</li> <li>• Sleep as a sacred act of care for yourself and for the world around you</li> <li>• Making this practice yours for life — a stable foundation for whatever comes</li> <li>• Brief science: sleep, longevity, immune health, and collective well-being</li> </ul>

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**About the Instructor**

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**Amelia Barili** has guided thousands of students over many years through courses in Meditation, Positive Neuroplasticity, Volunteering, and Resetting Your Nervous System at OLLI and UC Berkeley. Her teaching weaves ancient wisdom with neuroscience in a warm, embodied, and accessible way.

An award-winning faculty member at UC Berkeley and the Polyvagal Institute, and recipient of the **Chancellor's Award for Public Service**, Amelia brings decades of experience in community healing, somatic education, and contemplative practice to everything she teaches.

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*In 28 days, you can transform your relationship with sleep — and with yourself. Join us.*

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### **Explore More Practices**

*While you wait for the course to begin, you are warmly invited to explore additional practices and resources:*

 **Website:** [ameliabarili.com](https://ameliabarili.com) — *articles, courses, and somatic practices for body, mind, and spirit*

▶ **YouTube Channel:** [Amelia Barili on YouTube](#) — *guided practices, sleep techniques, and nervous system tools*