

Relaxation Training

Many people find that learning to relax helps them reduce worry and anxiety. It can also help improve sleep and relieve physical symptoms caused by stress, such as headaches or stomach pains. Learning to relax is a skill and takes practice before it can be done properly.

Here is a guide on how to relax. This exercise should take about 15-20 minutes. However, if you have only 5 minutes to spare, 5 minutes is better than nothing.

1. Find a quiet and relaxing place

Choose a spot where you won't be disturbed. Lie down flat on your back, preferably on a firm mattress. Make sure you take the phone off the hook. You may need to explain to your family or friends what you are doing so that they do not disturb you. Telling them may also reduce any embarrassment you may feel.

2. Clear your mind

Try to clear your mind of all worries or disturbing thoughts. If these worries or thoughts drift back into your mind while you are relaxing, do not try to stop them, just let them float gently across and out of your mind without reacting to them. Let your mind be clear and calm.

3. Practice the slow breathing method

Breathe in for 3 seconds and breath out for 3 seconds, thinking the word relax every time you breathe out. Let your breathing flow smoothly. Imagine the tension flowing out of your body each time you breathe out.

4. Relax your muscles

For each of the muscle groups in your body, tense the muscles for 7-10 seconds, then relax for 10 seconds. Tense your muscles moderately (not to the point of inducing pain). Don't try to relax. Simply let go of the tension in your muscles and allow them to become relaxed. Relax your muscles in the following order:

Hands – clench one fist tightly, then relax. Do the same with the other hand

Lower arms – bend your hand down at the wrist, as though you were trying to touch the

underside of your arm, then relax

Upper arms – bend your elbows and tense your arms. Feel the tension in your upper arm, then relax

Shoulders – lift your shoulders up as if trying to touch your ears with them, then relax

Neck - stretch your neck gently to the left, then forward, then to the right, then to the back in a slow rolling motion, then relax

Forehead and scalp – raise your eyebrows, then relax

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Eyes – screw up your eyes, then relax

Jaw – clench your teeth (just to tighten the muscles), then relax

Tongue – press your tongue against the roof of your mouth, then relax

Chest – breathe in deeply to inflate your lungs, then breath out and relax

Stomach – push your tummy in to tighten the muscle, then relax

Upper back – pull your shoulders forward with your arms at your side, then relax

Lower back – sit up and lean your head and upper back forward, rolling your back into a smooth arc thus tensing the lower back, then relax

Buttocks – tighten your buttocks, then relax

Thighs - while sitting up, push your heels firmly into the floor, then relax

Calves - bend your toes towards your shins, then relax

Feet - gently curl your toes down, then relax.

5. Enjoy the feeling of relaxation

Take some slow breaths while you sit still for a few minutes enjoying the feeling of relaxation.

Practice once or twice a day for at least eight weeks.