

Brief Relaxation Technique

suggested by "The Relaxation Response" by Herbert Benson, MD

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
2. Become aware of your breathing. Breathe through your nose if possible. As you breathe out, silently say the word "one" to yourself. Or you may choose another word with a relaxing connotation, such as "peace," "calm," "serene," etc.
3. Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning with the top of your head and progressing down to the bottom of your feet (or the other way around). Exhale tension with each breath.
4. Continue for 5-10 minutes. Continue to use your relaxing word, or choose another focal point. As an addition or variation, or if you have more time, you may add the visualization of a relaxing place, real or imaginary, where you can be completely comfortable, safe, and calm. Be as detailed as possible in constructing the visualization, using all five sensory modalities.
5. When you finish, sit quietly for a short time, and recall yourself to the present. Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, let them float through your consciousness and away (like clouds through the sky) without paying attention to them. Return to repeating your relaxing word.