



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

These two relaxation techniques have been shown to effectively help individuals relax and dial down the stress response in the brain and body.

Relax with Deep Breathing

- a. Select a quiet, comfortable place to sit or lie down.
- a. Close your eyes when first learning this technique.
- b. Clear your mind of all thoughts. Train your mind to be quiet.
- c. Pay attention to your breathing.
- d. Take a deep slow breath through your nose for the count of 4. Inhale as much air as you can and hold it for a count of 8. Become aware of the tension in your lungs and sense the tension in your muscles.
- e. Purse your lips and exhale slowly through your mouth for the count of 8. As the air flows from your lungs, and through you pursed lips, feel the tension in your lungs and muscles flowing out (leaving) of your body. Your body should feel similar to a deflating balloon as you release the air from your lungs. Think the word “relax” every time you exhale.
- f. Repeat this breathing technique 3 to 4 times.
- g. This breathing technique can lower cortisol (key stress hormone) levels, independent of any other interventions, when it is practiced 3 to 4 times a day.

Progressive Relaxation

- a. Select a quiet, comfortable place to lie down.
- b. Loosen tight clothing.
- c. Quiet your mind.
- d. Take two deep, cleansing breaths.
- e. Tense the muscles in your left foot/ankle/calf and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do feel your lower leg become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the left thigh.
- f. Tense the muscles in your left thigh and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do feel, your upper leg become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the right foot/ankle/calf.

- g. Tense the muscles in your right foot/ankle/calf and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do, feel your lower leg become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the right thigh.
- h. Tense the muscles in your right thigh and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do, feel your upper leg become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the abdomen/back.
- i. Tense the muscles in your abdomen/back and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do, feel your abdomen/back become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the left hand/wrist/forearm.
- j. Tense the muscles in your left hand/wrist/forearm and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do, feel your lower arm become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the left upper arm.
- k. Tense the muscles in your left upper arm and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do, feel your upper arm become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the right hand/wrist/forearm.
- l. Tense the muscles in your right hand/wrist/forearm and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do feel your lower arm become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the neck/face.
- m. Tense the muscles in your right upper arm and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do, feel your upper arm become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute before moving onto the neck/face.
- n. Tense the muscles in your neck/face and hold this for 5 seconds. Let go of the muscle tension and as you do, feel your neck/face become heavy, sinking into the floor, relaxed. Continue to experience this relaxed heaviness for a minute.
- o. Continue to remain in this heavy, relaxed state for 5 to 10 minutes. You may even slip into a light stage of sleep.
- p. When you are ready to awake, say to yourself, "I am completely relaxed and refreshed." Stretch and flex muscles in your arms, legs, back, abdomen, face and neck.