

SMART Relaxation

Overview: Meditation practices, including yoga and tai chi, show consistent benefits in promoting well-being and reducing stress. 10 minutes or more a day is optimal, plus additionally as needed for anxiety, irritability, or insomnia. This leads to greater attention, self-awareness, and self-regulation as well as improvement in anxiety, insomnia, inattention, and mood symptoms.

Details: Breathwork and mindfulness-based stress reduction help regulate the brain and autonomic nervous system by adjusting neurotransmitters like inflammatory cytokines, cortisol, and GABA. This leads to short- and long-term alteration in brain waves, increases gray matter, and improved connectivity within the brain, as well as boosts feel-good chemicals like dopamine and serotonin.

ASSESSMENT: Adapted from the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)									
Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below, please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience.				Almost always	Very frequently	Somewhat often	Somewhat infrequently	Very infrequently	Almost never
				1 pt	2 pt	3 pt	4 pt	5 pt	6 pt
I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later.									
I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.									
I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.									
I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way									
I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.									
I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.									
It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what I'm doing.									
I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.									
I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.									
I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.									
I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.									
I drive places on "automatic pilot" and then wonder why I went there.									
I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.									
I find myself doing things without paying attention.									
I snack without being aware that I'm eating.									
Subtotals									
TOTAL score					Divide by 15 →				
1-2	Low Mindfulness			3-4	Moderate Mindfulness			5-6	High Mindfulness

Education: Basic Mindful Meditation in 4 Steps

Set a gentle timer	Sit quietly with eyes closed	Breathe slowly and deeply listening to the breath
When distracted by thoughts, sounds, or sensations let them go and return to focus on the breath		

Relaxation Strategies: Consider the following ideas when picking SMART goals below.

Balanced breathing	Breathe in 1-2-3-4, then out 1-2-3-4, repeat x 5-10
Square breathing	Breathe in 1-2-3-4, hold your breath 1-2-3-4, breathe out 1-2-3-4, hold 1-2-3-4, repeat x 5-10
4-7-8 breathing	Breathe in 1-2-3-4, hold your breath 1-2-3-4-5-6-7, breathe out 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8, repeat x 5-10
Relax muscles 1	Clench feet then release x2, then calves, thighs, pelvis, stomach, shoulders, hands, neck, face
Relax muscles 2	Start with balanced breathing – on exhale say to yourself “my X is getting heavy” and imagine that body part sinking into the ground – repeat x2 – start with feet and move up the body
Try a body scan	Start with balanced breathing – focus on the feelings/sensations on the top of your head/scalp, on inhale imagine bright healing energy flooding that area, on exhale image dark unhealthy energy and pain leaving that area – repeat x2 – slowly move attention down the body over time
Try mindfulness	Close eyes, focus on breath – when attention wanders, return – 10 mins daily and as needed
Use an app	Calm, Headspace, Healthy Minds Program, Insight Timer, Smiling Mind (kids)
Do a workbook	A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook
Join a class	Join a meditation group or yoga studio and attend classes in real-time or recorded

SMART GOAL: Create a goal based on what you are doing now, past successes, or any new ideas.

S	Specific action and frequency	
M	Measure of progress	
A	Accountability partner or plan	
R	Relevant to what goal(s)	
T	Time to start and follow-up	

ACTIVITY LOG: Over the next 1-4 weeks, track your progress around the new behavioral goal and make notes on what goes well and poorly. Choose 1 goal or change/increase the goal weekly.

Week 1 Goal				Week 2 Goal			
Day	Yes	No	Notes	Day	Yes	No	No
M				M			
T				T			
W				W			
Th				Th			
F				F			
S				S			
Su				Su			
Week 3 Goal				Week 4 Goal			
Day	Yes	No	Notes	Day	Yes	No	No
M				M			
T				T			
W				W			
Th				Th			
F				F			
S				S			
Su				Su			

Repeat every 1- 4 weeks – when goals are achieved, return to **Health and Lifestyle Scorecards**