

# Relaxation Techniques

If you are feeling tense or you are having trouble sleeping at night, the following relaxation techniques may help you. Relaxation should be practised at least once daily, preferably at the same time and in the same place.

It doesn't matter which of the following relaxation techniques you use, as long as it works for you and you enjoy doing it.

Enjoy your relaxation!

## Technique 1 – repeating a mantra or phrase

1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the floor and slightly apart
2. Relax your head so it is slightly bent (so you can easily focus about a metre in front of your feet) .
3. Rest your arms on the top of your thighs with your palms facing upwards (or rest one open palm upon the other in your lap if this is more comfortable). Close your eyes.
4. Take a few deep and slow breaths through your nose
5. Become aware of any muscle tension and consciously let this tension go
6. Concentrate on your breathing, gently breathe into your abdomen and slow the rate you are breathing without causing discomfort or stress
7. As you breathe out say a phrase or a word, such as 'relax' or 'let go' to yourself
8. Repeat the word or the phrase of your choice for 10 to 20 breaths for a short relaxation or repeat the phrase for 15 minutes for a longer relaxation. As you find the mind wandering, gently bring it back to repeating the word or phrase. Open your eyes and check the time on your watch. Return to your meditation for a few more minutes before you bring it to a close.
9. You should now be feeling calm and peaceful. Wriggle your toes.
10. Stretch your hands and arms.
11. Open your eyes.
12. When you stand, ensure you take your time, as your blood pressure may have lowered during relaxation.

An alternative version you may like to try is to imagine the word or phrase is printed on the inside of your forehead. Focus on the image of this word as you breathe out.

## Technique 2 – visualising or imagining a peaceful scene

1. Use the technique above or one of the deep breathing exercises to help you breathe deeply and easily.
2. Once your breathing has become slow and regular, visualise a peaceful scene which makes you feel relaxed. You may visualise you are lying on a warm sandy beach, walking through a rainforest, sitting on a warm rock by the river or lying on a grassy hill looking at the sky.
3. Focus on each of your senses in great detail once you are in your peaceful scene.
4. Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin, the texture of the sand or grass under you.
5. Listen to the soft sound of the waves or the wind.
6. See the refreshing colours of the sky, the water or the trees.
7. Smell the ocean, the trees or the flowers.
8. Stay at your scene until you feel ready to leave and then imagine yourself getting up, stretching and walking away.
9. Wriggle your toes.
10. Stretch your hands and arms.
11. Open your eyes

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## Technique 3 - tightening and releasing the muscles

1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the floor slightly apart and your hands resting on your knees (if it is more comfortable, lie on the floor in the **relaxation position** - lying flat on your back with your arms beside and a small distance away from your body, palms facing upwards, your legs straight and a little bit apart, feet falling outwards, chin tucked in a little so your nose is not sticking up in the air and your neck is straight, mouth closed and tongue resting behind your top teeth, your eyes closed).
2. Work your way through your body, tensing and relaxing each part. Begin with your hands.
3. Clench your left hand into a fist as tight as you can and hold it for a few seconds. Relax the clenched hand so it is really floppy. Tense and relax your left forearm and then your upper arm in the same way. Lift the arm off the floor and then release.
4. Tense and relax your right hand and arm in the same way.
5. Move through each body part, tensing and relaxing each of your muscles (some parts will be easier to tense and relax than others). It does not matter in what order you choose to relax each muscle group.
6. When you have tensed and relaxed all your muscles, lie quietly for a moment and take some breaths in to your abdomen, with a long and slow exhale.
7. Bring the relaxation to a close. Wriggle your toes.
8. Stretch your hands and arms.
9. Open your eyes.

## Technique 4 – relaxing all parts of your body

1. You may wish to use some relaxation music in the background for this exercise. If not, make sure you are somewhere quiet.
2. Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the floor slightly apart and your hands resting on your knees (if it is more comfortable, lie on the floor in the **relaxation position** – lying flat on your back with your arms beside and a small distance away from your body, palms facing upwards, your legs straight and a little bit apart, feet falling outwards, chin tucked in a little so your nose is not sticking up in the air and your neck is straight, mouth closed and tongue resting behind your teeth, your eyes closed).
3. Take a few slow breaths, deepening the breath each time and exhaling slowly.
4. Beginning with the toes on one foot, work through your body saying to yourself 'relax the toes... relax the foot... relax the ankle... relax the calf... relax the knee' and so on until you have covered your entire body.
5. Do not actually move the parts of your body as you speak but be aware of the body part and be aware of it relaxing and becoming heavy.
6. After you have finished with each body part, remain in the relaxed state and take your attention to the music, or, if you are not playing music, lie quietly in the silence.
7. Bring the relaxation to a close. Wriggle your toes.
8. Stretch your hands and arms.
9. Open your eyes.