

APPENDIX A



Relaxation Techniques

Practicing relaxation techniques can help with stress from depression or while trying to stop using tobacco or drinking alcohol. This section describes four different relaxation techniques. Try all of the different methods and then decide which one works the best for you. Or, keep practicing all of them. For each method:

- Pick a quiet place and set aside 5-10 minutes during the day when you will not be disturbed. You may find it helpful to turn off the TV or radio as well as the phone.

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position. While relaxing, it is especially important to avoid muscle tension. Do not lie down, as you may fall asleep. A soft chair is usually the best choice.
- Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing.

Method 1: Deep Breathing Technique

Deep breathing is a relaxation technique in which you concentrate on breathing in relaxation and breathing out stress with every breath (If you have trouble breathing you may want to try another method).

Step 1. Breathe deeply into your abdomen. When you are tense, you tend to breathe shallowly into the upper chest. Breathing deeply into the lower abdomen begins to lower your stress response. As your diaphragm moves downward when you breathe in, your stomach will move outward. You should allow the air to go deeply into the abdomen. (If you have difficulty breathing sitting down, you may stand in a comfortable position with your feet about shoulder width apart, knees straight and not locked, and arms hanging loosely at the side with shoulders relaxed.)

Step 2. Exhale as completely as you can, through your mouth. Your abdomen will contract as you empty the air from your body.

Step 3. Inhale slowly through your nose and make your belly rise. Imagine the air as it flows deep into your body, filling it with fresh life-giving air, starting at the lower abdomen and slowly rising up to the upper lungs.

Step 4. Exhale again as completely as you can. Remember that breathing slowly and deeply enhances your relaxation response. Exhale and inhale deeply a minimum of 3 times for an immediate calming effect and 10 minutes for deeper relaxation.

Note: If you are having difficulty with inhaling deeply, remember you are learning a new way of breathing. It may take some practice before you learn it. Practice several times a week (or daily if possible); the more you practice the easier it becomes.

Method 2: Suggestive (Autogenic) Relaxation

Suggestive relaxation is a technique that uses direct verbal suggestions to promote physical relaxation. This method is similar to meditation. By moving attention away from distracting, non-relaxing thoughts, you can focus on phrases that encourage both physical and mental relaxation.

Step 1. Say to yourself the following statements: "My left hand is heavy. My left hand is heavy. I am at peace and my left hand is heavy." Continue repeating for 60 seconds. If distracting thoughts occur, allow them to fade and continue to repeat the suggestion.

Step 2. Say to yourself, “My right hand is heavy. My right hand is heavy. I am at peace and my right hand is heavy.” Continue for another 60 seconds.

Step 3. Repeat the phrases, substituting each foot, arm, leg and finally your overall body in the sentence. If you wish, you may repeat the whole sequence a second time. Practice often (several times a week or daily) and remember that practice makes perfect!

Method 3: Progressive Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that focuses on specific parts of the body. By tensing and relaxing your muscles you will learn some differences in sensation between tension and relaxation. If you experience chronic pain, you may want to try another method.

Step 1. Start with your hands and clench your fists. Note the sensation of tightness in your skin. Hold this position and note the discomfort of trying to keep your fists clenched. When you start to feel really uncomfortable, let go of your fist, noting the feeling of relaxing your hand (that is, the sensation of warmth that flows through your hand).

Step 2. Now flex your feet. Bring the tops of your feet back toward your knees with your toes clenched. When you start to feel really uncomfortable, relax your feet, and note the feeling of warmth as the muscles relax.

Step 3. Move on to other parts of the body such as your arms, and legs, and then your stomach and chest, and finally your neck and face.

Method 4: Guided Imagery Relaxation

Guided imagery is a relaxation technique that focuses on detailed images (like a walk on the beach). This technique, similar to a controlled daydream, helps the mind turn off stressful thoughts, and reduces tension in the body.



Step 1. **Breathe deeply**, inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.

Step 2. **Imagine a scene that is appealing and relaxing to you.** Imagery can include anything from a walk in the forest or on the beach to thinking about some of your favorite places or memorable events. The important thing in practicing guided imagery is that you imagine enough detail to really take you to that place of relaxation.

Here is one example:

Imagine that you are walking down a set of stairs. The stairs are any style or color that you wish. At each step you notice how it feels to place your foot down and what your surroundings look like. Note the different perspective when you stop on each step.

There are ten stairs and you may count each one going down:

- One (pause and note your surroundings),
- Two (pause and note your surroundings),
- Three (pause and note your surroundings),
- Repeat for four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

At the bottom of the stairs is a corridor with doors on either side. You choose the door that leads outside. At your feet is a brick path that you stroll down. It is a warm Spring day. You can feel the sun warm your face and body. You can hear birds singing in the trees and you notice the colors in the garden around you. There is the sound of water and as you move toward it, you may be surprised to notice a brook or river quite near. You may sit there for a while and enjoy the sights, sounds, and sensations of this beautiful, tranquil place.

Step 3. **When you are ready to end the session**, retrace your steps back to the place in the image where you started and then count slowly from 10 down to 1 before opening your eyes.

Summary

1. Stress can trigger using tobacco and drinking alcohol.
2. Relaxation is a natural solution to stress.
3. There are different ways to relax. Choose the ones that appeal to you.
4. Like any new skill, relaxation takes time and practice to master. The more you practice, the easier it is to relax and the easier it is to stay relaxed in stressful situations.