

Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation is a useful practise especially when you feel under stress. It can lead to a reduction in anxiety and tension it combats tiredness, increases mental and physical performances and can help to promote sleep when practised at bed time.

Preparing for Relaxation

Before start on any relaxation routine, it is important to ensure that you mind, body and environment are properly prepared.

The following steps are a guide to such preparation.

- Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down somewhere comfortable in a quiet, warm room where you will not be interrupted.
- If you are sitting, take your shoes off and let your feet rest on the ground. If they don't touch the floor, try and find a book or similar object to rest them on. Uncross your legs and rest your arms on the arms on the chair.
- If you are lying down, lie on your back with your arms at your side. If necessary use a comfortable pillow for your head. If your lower back feels uncomfortable put a cushion or pillow under your legs.

Relaxation Exercise

- Begin by breathing out, and then breathe in easily. Repeat. Breathe slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Expand your abdomen as you breathe in then raising your rib cage to let more air in until your lungs are filled right to the top.
- Hold your breath for 3 seconds and then breathe out slowly, allowing your rib cage and stomach to relax. Empty your lungs completely. Do not strain. Keep it slow, deep and rhythmic, for the duration of five minutes.
- Once you have established a breathing pattern start the following sequence, tensing each part of the body separately as you breathe in, holding your breathe for 5 seconds while you keep your muscles tense, then breathing out slowly while at the same time leaving go of the tension in your muscles and relaxing.

Relaxation sequence:

- Press your feet and heels down and curl your toes hard
- Tense your calf muscles

- Tense your thigh muscles making your legs still
- Make your buttocks tight
- Tense your stomach as if to receive a punch
- Tense the muscles in your arms
- Hunch your shoulders and press in
- Clench your jaws, frown and screw up your eyes really tight
- Tense all your muscles together after a few seconds relax
- Now while still breathing slowly and deeply imagine a white rose on a black background. Try to see the rose as clearly as possible, concentrating your attention on it for 30 seconds. Do not hold your breath during this time; continue to breathe as you have been doing.
- Now visualise another peaceful object of your choice. Again try to see this object as clearly as possible, concentrating your attention on it for 30 seconds while continuing to breathe slowly and deeply.
- Lastly give yourself the instruction that when you come out of this exercise, you will be perfectly relaxed and alert.
- Stretch and sit up and slowly start to move again. (Reference: [Understanding Stress by Prof Greg Wilkinson](#))

How else can you help yourself to relax?

Talking to other people is important and can be a profound healing step.

Talking about you can be painful and uncomfortable, however the following may help:

- Talking to someone you like and trust and who you believe will be sensitive
- Plan what you might say ahead of time, perhaps even writing it down
- The '[3 minute breathing space](#)' is useful to reduce moments of tension and stress.

It's a short, 3 minute guided exercise that can be practised at home, work, or out and about