



## Relaxation technique

### Learn to really relax

Relaxation/meditation is not a mysterious or mystical experience available only to a select few adepts. It is a natural and valuable ability which we all possess, even though we may not have practised the skill for many years. It's a natural skill that most of us have forgotten how to use. As children we could relax at will, anywhere.

It's time to re-learn this life-enhancing skill.



### Why (re-)learn to relax?

- Relaxation enables you to take a break and switch off from the stresses of life whenever you wish.
- It provides a few precious moments in which to re-charge your mental and physical batteries.
- Relaxation is the bed-rock of effective stress management.
- It enables you to stand back and switch off from problems - so that, often, when you return to them you can perceive solutions that had previously escaped you.
- If you have intense fears or phobias you will find your relaxation skills essential for using systematic desensitisation to dissolve your fears.

### How to relax - with a relaxation tape

Get a good relaxation tape and spend some time becoming skilled at switching off and deeply relaxing whenever you wish. It may be helpful to use a tape with a commentary at first, since this will take you through a series of steps to help you become deeply relaxed. However once you have learned how to do this it is best to use a music-only tape and to use your own imagination to relax deeply and to actively utilise imagery during the session.

### How to relax - without a relaxation tape

The following is a simple method of relaxing which you can develop by using mental imagery and/or soft relaxing music:

1. Make yourself physically comfortable. Initially shrug, stretch, and then sit comfortably upright with hands resting on your thighs or lap. Use a few long exhales to help you settle (Breathe

in and slowly count to four, then slowly breathe out counting down from eight to zero.

Should you have more breath when you get down to zero, repeat zero again and again until all the air is out). Keep your eyes open for now.

2. Pay attention to what you can see, hear, and feel.
3. Close your eyes. This gives your brain a break by reducing the amount of in-coming data it has to process.
4. Now pay attention to what you can see, hear and feel with your eyes closed.
5. Do five long exhales, using the same method as above. As you do this relax (a) your feet and legs, (b) Your hands and arms, (c) Your torso, (d) Your head and neck, (e) Your entire body. Pay attention to the relaxing effect of each of these out-breaths.
6. Now continue to allow yourself to switch off - breathing normally - paying attention to how your body can relax a little more each time you exhale.

### **Tips for your Relax Session**

- Years of 'normal' stressful living undermine our natural ability to switch off and relax anywhere, anytime. You are now simply re-learning this natural ability.
- Relaxation is something you allow to happen. You cannot force the issue. It is a gradual process of discovering your personal forms of emotional and physical tension and then discovering which ways of releasing these work best for you.
- At first most people find it much easier to relax the body rather than the mind. This is normal. You can certainly learn to allow your mind to become quieter - it simply takes a little longer.
- For the first few weeks relax in a sitting position. It is easier to relax lying down but if you make yourself too comfortable you risk falling asleep or becoming too drowsy and this negates some of the benefits.
- There is no right way to relax! So rather than attempting to 'get it right' experiment to discover what works best for you.
- The quality of your relaxation will vary considerably during any session. One moment you may think you are losing the experience and the next you may be even more relaxed than before. So if you think it is not working calmly stay at ease for another minute or so. Then, if necessary, give up and have another session 30-60 minutes later.
- There is no 'right' time to relax. Take a break any time you like - especially when you notice tension or a negative mood beginning to build up. For the first few weeks you may find it more beneficial to take lots of short 3-5 minute breaks. Most people find it useful to have a relaxing session at the beginning of the day.
- Initially your tension level may rise again soon after a session and you may wonder what is the point in relaxing. Here remind yourself that had you not taken a break the tension would now be much higher - and that these breaks are conditioning your body/mind to react differently to pressures.