

Relaxation - Mental Relaxation.

Now we are talking, time to kick back and relax with some tested and proven methods that help with mentally relaxing.

Meditation is becoming more and more popular with various meditation & sleeping/ calming apps available for free such as *Headspace*. Below is an example of 'Guided Meditation' where each step is talked through in a calming voice. Read through this initially and try the techniques, if you prefer you can download an app or watch via Youtube.

Source: www.mind.org.uk

1. Make yourself comfortable, lying or sitting down. Turn off all distractions (phone etc.).
2. Begin by clenching your right hand into a tight fist and at the same time taking a deep breath through the nose. Take a really deep breath and hold it (Breathe in 1 – 2 – 3) – feel the tension in your lungs – hold your breath – feel all the tension – and breathe out (breathe out 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6) When breathing out relax the hand and feel your body relax. Close your eyes and relax comfortably – feel heavy, warm and relaxed, without any effort.
If it helps imagine collapsing into your bed or favourite chair after a tough day. That big sigh you would give.
3. Let your whole body relax more and more deeply as you breathe smoothly and slowly, using your stomach. Feel yourself becoming heavier, relaxed and warm each time you breathe out slowly.
4. Relax your muscles deeply, think of each body part and mentally feel them relax getting heavier.
5. Relax your forehead: your face; your eyebrows; your eyelids are heavy and relaxed; relax your mouth; your tongue and your jaw.
6. The more you relax, the heavier your body will become. All your muscles become heavier and heavier – a feeling of warmth and heaviness is spreading throughout your whole body.
7. Relax your neck; let your shoulders drop and feel heavy, warm and relaxed.
8. Let the relaxation spread to your arms, all the way out to the tips of your fingers.
9. Let it spread through your back and lower part of your body. Notice the feeling of complete relaxation. Breathe smoothly and slowly from your stomach, feeling heavier, limp and slack each time you breathe out slowly and smoothly from your stomach.
10. Let all thoughts and noises drift through your mind like passing clouds. Nothing disturbs your deep relaxation – nothing makes you feel worried or uneasy. Everything feels calm and peaceful.
11. Notice how heavy and relaxed your body has become. When your body is completely relaxed, you cannot be bothered to move a single muscle.
12. Continue to breathe slowly and smoothly, using your stomach. Each time you breathe out, you feel as if you are sinking down deeper and deeper. It feels good to let things drift through your mind like passing clouds – and to let yourself drift deeper into a heavy, warm and comfortable feeling of relaxation.
13. Continue to relax on your own for a while (continue for 2-3 minutes).
14. Now each time you relax like this you will find that it becomes easier and quicker for you to relax more deeply. You will notice that this type of relaxation gives you complete rest, both physically and mentally. After each session, you will feel rested, calm and alert.
15. Feel yourself becoming more alert now, before you open your eyes fully, take some really deep breaths and stretch your whole body (like a cat) Feel completely alert and well in every way as you open your eyes.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation.

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Relax yourself to the best of your ability. Consider the various muscle groups one at a time, and aim to learn the difference between tight and relaxed muscles. Try constantly to concentrate on the feeling in the muscle as it goes from tight to loose.

Hands and arms.

Clench your fists, and tense your arms; feel tightness in your hands and arms, then slowly relax them. See how far they will go, but do not push. Do not hold on at all; let everything go.

Shoulders.

Hunch your shoulders, then gradually let them settle down. See how far they will go, but do not push. Do not hold on at all; let everything go.

Forehead.

Pull your eyebrows together, then gradually let your forehead smooth out. Do not hold on at all; let everything go.

Eyes.

Screw your eyes up tight, then gradually let them smooth out, leaving your eyes closed, feeling your eyeballs sink, and your eyelids droop. Let them get really heavy.

Jaw.

Bite your back teeth together, then gradually ease off, and let your jaw get heavy.

Back of neck.

Pull your chin forward on to your chest, feel tightness, then relax.

Front of neck.

Pull your head back, feel tightness, then relax.

Breath.

Slow and steady, letting yourself go each time you breathe out.

Tummy.

Pull in your tummy tight, then gradually let it go, feeling it relax.

Thighs.

Push your heels down hard against the floor, feeling the tightness in your thighs, then gradually let that go.

Calves.

Point your toes, then gradually let that tightness go.

Let everything go, further and further, and think about a really relaxing scene, for example, lying in the grass by a river, under a warm sun and a blue sky, or sitting by a fire in a big, comfortable chair. Feel yourself getting heavier and heavier.

Relaxation – Breathing & other techniques.

Bad Breathing.

Shallow breathing from the chest delivers less air to the lungs. Less air per breath leads to a higher number of breaths that can create feelings of fatigue & depression. Learning to inhale slowly re-balances you by taking in more oxygen. Stress, anxiety and emotions all affect our breathing – the natural ‘fight or flight’ response that increases respiration.

Good Breathing.

It is easy to develop good breathing habits, but it takes practice. Good breathing used in relaxation techniques comes from the diaphragm/abdomen. Concentrate your breathing by placing one hand on your diaphragm (just under your ribs at the top of your stomach) and the other hand on the upper part of your chest. If necessary adjust your breathing slowly until its only your bottom hand that is moving. You are now using your diaphragm to control your breathing.

When you feel any of the ‘flight or fight’ responses, take three slow breaths. Count slowly to three when you breathe through your nose (and stomach rather than your chest). Breathe out on a slow count of six through your mouth.

Breathe in 1 – 2 – 3

Breathe out 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6

Practice this and it will become a strategy available to you in stressful situations.

Technique for a Racing Mind. (Source: The ‘Relaxation Response’ by Dr Herbert Benson).

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
2. Deeply relax all of your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep your muscles relaxed.
3. Breathe through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out say the word, ONE silently to yourself. E.g. Breathe in...Out “ONE”, In...Out “ONE” etc. Breathe easily & naturally.
4. Continue for 10-20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm.
5. When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed, then with your eyes opened. Do not stand up for a few minutes.
6. Do not worry about if you are successful in achieving a deep state of relaxation. When distracted, simply return to repeating “ONE”.

This technique can be used to get you to sleep at night after a tough school day. It is simple and can fit it into your day when needed; it is fast, reliable and works well.

Freeze Frame Technique. (Source: ‘Transforming Stress’ by Doc Childre).

This technique works great for people that are able to visualize well.

1. **SEE and PAUSE** - Recognise the stressful feeling, see it visualize it, and then pause it, like pushing the Pause button or taking a time-out.
2. **HEART BREATH** – Take a deep breath. Make a sincere effort to shift your focus away from the racing mind or disturbed emotions to the area around your heart. Pretend you are breathing through your heart to help focus your energy in this area. Keep your focus there for ten seconds or more.
3. **RECALL and FEEL** – Recall a positive, fun feeling or time you have had in your life and attempt to re-experience it. Focus on the feeling rather than the thoughts or visual image. Activate the positive emotion.
4. **Optional STEP 4**– Using your intuition, common sense and sincerity. Ask your heart, what would be a more efficient response to the situation you are Freeze-Framing, one that will minimize future stress?
5. **Optional STEP 5** – Listen to what your heart says in answer to your question.