

Relaxation techniques: General guidelines:

- For maximum benefit, the technique should be performed everyday for 10-20 minutes. Even 5 minutes twice a day would be helpful.
- It should not be done on a full stomach.
- It should be performed in a quiet, comfortable spot of your choosing. Free from outside stimulation.
- Check your time with a watch-don't use an alarm.
- If your mind wanders, turn your attention back to your breathing and keep repeating the chosen word or phrase, or listen to music or audiotape playing in the background.
- Don't worry if you're relaxing enough or getting the right response. If you're doing it, the response will occur and the physiological changes will take place.
- Afterwards, you should feel relaxed and calm. This effect may last for several hours.
- There are many techniques for relaxation and no one method is better than another. In fact, it may be more effective for you to combine pieces of several different methods.

DEEP BREATHING

The most basic. Sit in place, hands resting on lap, armrest or side. You can also place your hands on your stomach to feel the expansion and contraction of your lungs and diaphragm. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, letting your stomach expand as much as possible. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, which allows you to control how fast you exhale as it keeps your airways open longer. Feel the rhythm of it, in & out, emptying out, clearing and cleaning.

AUTOGENICS

Concentrate on a mental suggestion such as "my left arm feels heavy and warm." Concentrate intently on this suggestion; try to actually feel your arm getting heavier and warmer. Convince yourself it is true. Then repeat the same process focusing on your right arm, right leg, etc. You can do this from head to toe, focusing on one limb at a time.

CLEARING THE MIND

Allow yourself to mentally focus on a single, peaceful thought or image. Reduce distractions. Focus only on that thought; repeat it over and over to yourself. Listen to the rhythm of it.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

This is a 3 step technique. First, tense a muscle or muscle group and notice how it feels. Then release the tension and let it flow right out, pay attention to that feeling. Next, concentrate on the difference between those 2 sensations. This also works well head-toe or visa versa, for total body relaxation.

VISUALIZATION

This is a mental vacation. Allow your imagination to run free! Think of your most favorite place to be, and put yourself there in your mind. Try to imagine all of the details. Tune in all your senses. Are you lying on the beach? How does the sun feel on your skin? Do you hear the waves? Seagulls? What does the air smell like? Do you see sailboats?