

Relaxation Exercises

There are various relaxation exercises that you can use to calm the mind and reduce the muscle tension that anxiety can cause.

You should try to set aside 30 minutes, 2 or 3 times each day to practise these techniques. The more you practise, the better you will get and the more effective they will be. It is important to keep using these techniques, even if you don't feel better straight away. It will take time and regular practise before you start to feel the benefits.

Relaxation Preparation

Before you start relaxing, make sure your mind, body and surroundings are just right. To prepare yourself:

- ◆ Find a cool and quiet room where you won't be disturbed
- ◆ Make sure your clothes are comfortable and take off your shoes
- ◆ Lie down or sit comfortably with your legs uncrossed
- ◆ Lightly close your eyes, or focus on a spot in front of you
- ◆ Clear your thoughts and focus on your breath



Don't worry if you can't relax immediately. Thoughts might pop into your mind. Don't focus on them, just let them pass through.

Breathing to Relax

Breathing too quickly and deeply can make you feel dizzy, faint or even more anxious. Taking slow, regular breaths can help you to control anxious thoughts and feelings and make you feel calmer.

To control your breathing:

- ◆ Place one hand on your chest and the other over your stomach. You want your stomach to move more than your chest as you breathe
- ◆ Take a slow, regular breath in (through your nose if you can). Watch your hands as you breathe in. The hand on your stomach should move and your chest should not
- ◆ Breathe out slowly through pursed lips
- ◆ Repeat this 10 times, twice a day



It might take time to master this technique. Once you have, you won't need to watch your hands or put them on your chest and stomach.

Simple Visualisation Exercise

In your mind create an ideal spot to relax - your relaxation place:

- ◆ Somewhere you will find restful, calming, safe and happy
- ◆ A place you would want to return to whenever you feel the need to relax
- ◆ It can be a real place or imaginary



Imagine your relaxation place in as much detail as you can – use your senses to make it as real as possible – and see yourself comfortably enjoying this place.

Now close your eyes and take a slow, regular breath in through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. Focus on your relaxation place in all its detail and breathe out through your mouth. Do this exercise for 10 to 20 minutes.

Quick Muscle Relaxation

You can relieve tension in any part of your body just by tensing and relaxing each muscle in turn. If you have any physical injuries or conditions that may cause muscle pain, don't tense the muscle in that area.

Sitting in a comfortable chair close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. Slowly breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Hands: Clench one hand tightly for a few seconds as you breathe in. You should feel your forearm muscles tense; then relax as you breathe out. Repeat with the other hand.

Arms: Bend an elbow and tense all the muscles in the arm for a few seconds as you breathe in; then relax as you breathe out. Repeat the same with the other arm.

Face: Try to frown and lower your eyebrows as hard as you can for a few seconds; then relax. Then raise your eyebrows (as if you were startled) as hard as you can; then relax. Then clench your jaw for a few seconds; then relax.

Shoulders: Raise your shoulders as high as you can as you breathe in; then relax as you breathe out.

Neck: Press your head back as hard as is comfortable and roll it slowly from side to side; then relax.

Legs: Bend your feet and toes towards you as hard as you can; then relax. Then bend them away from you for a few seconds; then relax.

After relaxation

Don't rush to get up after relaxation exercises. Sit with your eyes closed for a few minutes to avoid the possibility of feeling dizzy. Open your eyes and make sure you feel all right before you stand up.