

Stress Management: An Online Relaxation Workshop

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Please note:

The following relaxation exercises are designed to promote a state of calmness, along with emotional and physical well-being. When practiced regularly, these techniques can be highly effective in reducing stress and facilitating productive coping efforts.

Although these techniques are generally very safe, at times people have been known to experience sensations not necessarily compatible with relaxation. If you experience an uncomfortable sensation or reaction during one of these exercises, simply stop the exercise and, with your eyes open, sit quietly as others complete the session.

Regardless of your reactions to these exercises, you may wish to share your experience with your physician or therapist to decide if "relaxation" is a strategy that can be used to promote your emotional and physical well-being in the future.

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Deep-Breathing

- **Emphasis on breathing slowly**
- **Focus on abdominal breathing, not chest breathing (chest breathing promotes anxiety)**
- **Counting can help to slow the pace of breathing**

Guided Imagery

- **Including mental images of peaceful scenes, along with deep-breathing, may promote a more potent relaxation response**
- **Mental images can either be described by the speaker, or can be of the person's own choosing**
- **Continue to focus on deep, slow, abdominal breathing**

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- **System of tensing/relaxing various muscle groups.**
- **As muscles relax, an immediate relaxation response may follow.**
- **4 muscle groups:**
 - a. Arms/Hands**
 - b. Head/Neck**
 - c. Chest/Shoulders/Upper Back/Abdomen**

(i.e., tighten entire upper body except arms)

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Tense for about 4-5 seconds when I say to tense “NOW”
- Immediately release all the tension when I say to “RELAX”
- Breathe normally

- Individuals with any type of chronic pain should either tense muscles extremely lightly, or simply “imagine” tensing (but not actually tense without first consulting a physician)

Autogenic Training

- **Similar to guided imagery, in that certain images and thoughts/repeated words promote certain feeling states (e.g., relaxation).**
- **In autogenics, we repeat certain relaxing words/phrases several times to promote specific physical or emotional sensations.**
- **Utilize deep-breathing during autogenics.**
- **If you do not like a word or a phrase I choose, you may select your own.**
- **As I take you through the autogenic session, simply remain quiet, continue to breathe, and repeat the words/phrases that I say to you silently.**

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