

Relaxation Techniques

- **Exercise 1:** This nine-step procedure is quoted from Twining (1991, p. x). It can be used while seated or lying down in a quiet room. Use this exercise in one's room the night before a stressful event or just before leaving one's room. Play soothing music if that helps you relax. For each step, remember to inhale as muscles are tightened and to exhale as muscles are relaxed.
 - Step 1: Tighten your right fist; feel the tension build. Now release the fist. Let your hand go limp; feel the relaxation. Next tighten your left fist; feel the tension. Now release; feel the relaxation.
 - Step 2: Bend your right arm, tightening your fist and your biceps. Hold it tight and feel the tension in your arm. Now release the tension and let your arm hang loose and feel the relaxation. Next, bend your left arm, tightening your fist and your biceps. Hold it tight and feel the tension in your arm. Now release the tension and let your arm hang loose and feel the relaxation.
 - Step 3: Straighten out your right arm until it feels stiff as the triceps tightens. Now release the tension and let the arm hang loose. Next, straighten out your left arm until it feels stiff. Then release the tension and let the arm hang loose.
 - Step 4: Close your eyes tight; feel the pressure mount. Now open your eyes and relax the tension. Next clench your teeth; feel the pressure in your jaws. Now release your jaws and feel the relaxation.
 - Step 5: Inhale deeply and hold the breath tight in your lungs. Now release and feel the flow of relaxation. Again, inhale; hold it. Exhale. Relax.
 - Step 6: Now tighten your stomach muscles; hold the tension. Now release the stomach muscles and relax. Again, tighten the stomach muscles; now relax.
 - Step 7: Straighten your legs and tighten your thighs, let the tension build. Now release the tension, let your legs lie loose, and feel the relaxation. Again, straighten your legs and tighten your thighs. Now release the tension.
 - Step 8: Straighten your feet and tighten your calves. Now let your muscles go loose. Again, tighten your calves, then release your muscles and feel the relaxation.
 - Step 9: Now relax your body completely, allowing it to lie limp. Feel the total relaxation that comes from a lack of tension.

- **Exercise 2:** The exercise involves physical relaxation as well as positive self-talk. Use the strategy in one's room before a stressful event or in the classroom during those nervous minutes waiting to do a stressful activity. While the instructions refer specifically to test-taking situations, the exercise may be used before any activity that produces anxiety, like public speaking, interviews, or class presentations.
 - Position yourself comfortably in the chair. Close your eyes and breathe deeply from the stomach. Notice that your muscles are beginning to feel smooth, a little heavy and comfortable.
 - Focus on your breathing, exhaling slowly. As you exhale, let go of all tension and negative thought.
 - Notice how relaxed you feel. You can feel this relaxed even in a stressful situation.
 - Your muscles are relaxed and you are breathing deeply. Imagine yourself in the classroom taking an exam. See yourself sitting there breathing as you are right now, feeling comfortable and thinking positive thoughts. You are very much in control. Each time you exhale, you feel more serene, calm and confident.
 - You have all the knowledge you need to pass this exam. You have studied using the best study techniques you know, and you are fully prepared. You will have no problem passing this exam.
 - See yourself reading each question, one at a time, slowly and carefully, moving through each item on the exam. You have the ability to do well on this exam.

- Take a moment now to experience how calm and regular your breathing is and how confident you feel. After you have counted five breaths, open your eyes and feel relaxed and alert.
- **Exercise 3:** This last-minute relaxation technique helps students focus and relax in the classroom before a stressful event. It even may be used during a stressful activity if anxiety levels increase and the student feels he/she is losing control. The exercise is simple and easy to remember.
 - Close your eyes. Tense every muscle in your body, starting with the neck and moving down to the shoulders, arms, stomach, legs, and feet. Keep all muscles tensed as you move down the body. Inhale as each muscle is contracted, and hold your breath for a few seconds; then slowly exhale.
 - After all the muscles in your body are tense, hold them for a few seconds.
 - Starting with the toes, slowly relax every muscle in your body. Exhale as each muscle is relaxed.
 - Repeat the process as necessary.
- **Exercise 4:** This relaxation technique, quoted from Lunenfeld and Lunenfeld (1992, p. 27), is based on muscle control and visualization. Use this exercise before or during a stressful activity when anxiety levels begin to rise.
 - Find a comfortable chair or sit on the carpet or a cushion. It helps to take off your shoes and close your eyes. Tense up your muscles, starting with your jaw. Make a fist. Tighten your calf muscles. Next, let them relax.
 - Now visualize a staircase. Imagine grasping the balustrade and walking up the plush steps. When you reach the top, visualize walking into a very pleasant place, such as a forest, a beach, or any area in which you liked to play as a child.
 - Try to use all of your senses to aid you to bring this scene to life. For example, if you're at the beach feel yourself walking in warm water up to your knees. Feel the water on the lower part of your legs and the sun on the upper part of your body. Taste the salt in the air. Try to hear the sound of the waves as they hit the shore. (To help this visualization you can purchase a tape of wave sounds and play it in the background as you go through this routine.) You can see the blue of the water, the white clouds in the sky, and so on. If you put it all together you might actually think yourself back there; even when real snow is falling outside your room.
 - At this point, start listening to your breathing. It should be deep and even.
 - Now tense up your muscles again, starting with your jaw and working down to your toes. With your muscles tense, go through the visualization exercise of walking up the stairs to your favorite location. While in the happy scene slowly relax your muscles, one by one, until you are completely calm, as judged by regular deep breathing.
 - If you are willing to take this exercise one last step; think hard about an upcoming exam or other tense situation you fear. You will notice your muscles at once tighten involuntarily and your breathing again becomes shallow and irregular. By plunging back into your visualizations, while at the same time relaxing your muscles and keeping your breathing regular, you will go a long way towards being able to control panic in any difficult situation. When the actual situation arrives, just go through all the steps you practiced. You will not only feel yourself relaxing, but also you will notice your mind clearing.

Source: www.psychwww.com/mtsite/memory/html