
HEALTH EDUCATION

Relaxation techniques are often helpful in relieving tension and pain. Try the techniques below to find what works best for you. Use them when you become aware of tension or discomfort in your body. It is helpful to do them each day. For best results, find a comfortable, quiet, safe place. You may want to play soft music in the background.

Deep Breathing

Take a deep breath through your nose, counting to 4 slowly. Let the air out slowly, counting to 4 as you breathe out. Imagine that you are breathing in positive energy and breathing out tension. Let go of the tension. Try to practice this while doing other relaxation techniques or at times when you feel especially tense.

Stretching

Stand or sit and gently reach as high as you can with comfort. Stay in the stretch for about 5 seconds. Relax. Repeat.

Visualization of a Favorite Place

Find a quiet place. Close your eyes and allow your body to begin to feel relaxed and comfortable. Now think of a place where you feel very calm and happy. This could be a place where you have lived or been on vacation. Use all of your senses. What can

you see, smell, taste, feel, and hear? The details will help create the place in your mind. You can come back to this moment at any time by pausing and taking deep breaths to help you relax as you think of your special place

Rag Doll

Sit in a comfortable chair. Allow your whole body to relax and become limp. Imagine yourself loose and limp just like a rag doll.

Meditation

Meditation can also be helpful. Watching a candle, a fire in a fireplace, or a fish tank are simple techniques that many people find relaxing.

- Choose a place to sit and get in a comfortable position.
- Take some deep breaths.
- When you feel yourself becoming more relaxed, let your eyes focus on the object.
- Allow your body to feel more and more relaxed. Keep breathing slowly. Do this for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Now close your eyes and focus on the images that are there for at least a minute.
- Slowly open your eyes to get used to the light. You will feel awake, but rested and calm.

Tension/Relaxation

Begin by lying down. Move around until you feel comfortable. Gently close your eyes. You will be slowly tensing and then relaxing all the parts of your body. Do not tense any part of your body that hurts.

Steps:

Hold each exercise for **a count of about five** then relax. Repeat each step several times.

1. Start by making fists with your hands. Close them as tightly as you can without hurting any sore joints. Hold, and then relax.
2. Next make a muscle with the upper part of your arms. Hold, and then relax. Feel the tension flow out of you.
3. Shrug your shoulders and gently pull them up towards your ears. Hold, and then relax.
4. Work on all parts of your face.
 - Open your mouth as far as it will go as if you are yawning. Let go of the tension and feel the warm relaxation.
 - Do other things with your face such as opening your eyes widely and wrinkling your forehead, closing your eyes tightly, pressing your tongue to the roof of your mouth, wrinkling your nose and sticking out your tongue. You should feel the tension leaving your face.
5. Tighten your chest muscles by taking a deep breath and holding it for 5 seconds. Relax as you exhale.

6. Now pull your stomach in tightly. Hold and relax. Notice the feeling of comfort that spreads through that part of your body.
7. Squeeze your buttocks together. Hold, and then relax.
8. Press your thighs down against the floor or bed and hold. Then relax and let go of the tension.
9. Press the calves of your legs down until you feel tension. Let go and feel the relaxation that spreads through your legs.
10. Finally, tense your feet by curling your toes. Hold, and then relax.

Now your whole body is comfortable and relaxed. Rest quietly and allow the feelings of relaxation to fill your body. If you notice any area that is still holding tension, focus on that area, and gently let go. Breathe in and let relaxation spread to that area of your body. When you are ready, open your eyes and slowly return to your normal level of awareness.

These relaxation techniques can be memorized, taped, or a friend can read them to you. You can also find CDs, DVDs, and phone apps. Find the ones that are most helpful to you and use them to feel more comfortable and relaxed in your daily routine.