

BRIEF RELAXATION EXERCISES

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

For all of these exercises, it is best to be seated, eyes closed, feet flat on the floor or crossed at the ankles, and hands resting comfortably in the lap. Begin each exercise with a deep breath that you let out gently. As you let it out, feel yourself beginning to relax. **GENTLE AROUSAL.** –After the exercise, slowly and gently activate by breathing a little more deeply, wiggling your fingers and toes, and opening your eyes at your own rate.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (do General Directions above)

Clench your fists. While keeping them clenched, pull your forearms tightly up against your upper arms. While keeping those muscles tense, tense all the muscles in your legs. While keeping all those tense, clench your jaws and shut your eyes fairly tight ... not too tightly. Now, while holding all those tense, take a deep breath and hold it for five seconds ... Then let everything go all at once. Feel yourself letting go of all your tensions. Just enjoy that feeling for a minute as your muscles let go more and more. Just enjoy focusing, gently, on letting go. (do Gentle Arousal)

BREATHING EXERCISE (do General Directions first)

With your eyes closed, and while relaxing quietly, gently focus on the end of your nose. As you breathe in, feel the air coming in the tip of your nose. Notice that the air coming in is cooler than the air going out ... Gently focus on the cool air coming in, and the warm air going out. As your attention wanders, just gently bring it back to the tip of your nose... (do Gentle Arousal).

FOCUS ON A WORD (do General Directions first)

Pick some word which has “good” vibrations associated with it for you--a word you associate with relaxation, comfort, peace. It could be a word such as “serenity,” or “cool, peaceful, joy, free,” etc... Now, just let that word hold the center of your thoughts. As your mind wanders to more stressful thoughts, gently bring it back to that word.... After a while, perhaps your mind will drift to other gentle, restful thoughts. If so, just let it wander....When it does drift to stressful thoughts, move back to your original word. (do Gentle Arousal).

MENTAL IMAGERY

The use of mental imagery is a powerful relaxation tool. Develop for yourself a scene in your mind that is calming and soothing—a mountain meadow, lying on the beach, or whatever works for you. Make this scene as vivid as possible – what do you see?... What do you hear...smell...or feel? Practice relaxing with this mental picture. Here are the steps:

1. Do the “General Directions.” Calm your breathing pattern.
2. Take several very slow, very deep breaths. As you exhale, imagine that you are exhaling tension.
3. Now check your body for tension. Relax physically.
4. Bring in to mind your mental picture as vividly as if you were really there. Allow this image to stay in your mind while you continue to relax even more. (If you are training yourself to use imagery, stay with this step for 5-10 minutes. If you are using this exercise to relax before or during a test, stay on this step from ½ to 3 minutes.
5. Do “Gentle Arousal”

Each time you practice this exercise, you will relax more quickly. Ideally, your mental image will become so powerful that just bringing this picture to mind will cause an automatic relaxation response in your body and mind.

Source Unknown
7/2008