

4 RELAXATION TECHNIQUES: DO THEM ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Progressive Body Relaxation: Relax the major muscle groups in your body.

1. Wear comfortable clothing. Sit in a favorite chair or lie down. Breathe comfortably and naturally.
2. Close your eyes and begin with the top of your head. Notice both the subtle and more obvious sensations. Where you notice any tension, send the message to relax or imagine breathing so the inhalation is directed to the tense area, and with the exhalation all the tension leaves that area of the body with the breath. You may find it especially relaxing to maintain a “Mona Lisa” subtle smile through this practice.
3. Slowly move your attention down the body, noticing the sensations of each progressive body part. Wherever you notice tension, use the two techniques —of intention and breath—to relax.
4. Slowly move on to relax the muscles around the eyes, nose, and jaw. Let the tongue sit at the bottom of the mouth (not pressed against the top). Relax the neck. Allow the shoulders to hang heavily (not creep up to the ears). Relax the arms, hands, and fingertips. Allow the chest to feel wide and open so breathing is easy. Let the stomach out. Relax the hips, thighs, calves, feet, and toes.
5. Once you’ve relaxed your whole body, you can end there, or more quickly scan the body again and relax any parts that tensed up again. Or, find a spot that feels relaxed and slowly spread that feeling throughout the body.

Visualization: The power of imagination.

1. Sit in a favorite chair or lie down. Be comfortable.
2. Imagine a pleasant, peaceful scene, such as a beach where you are floating in clear turquoise waters, or laying in a hammock as the breeze caresses your skin. Walk yourself through the scene, taking notice of smells, sights, sounds.
3. Focus on the scene for a set amount of time and then gradually return to your other activities.

Meditation: Focus to clear the mind.

1. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Sit in a comfortable upright position.

2. Close your eyes and set the intention to let go of your thoughts about the past and the future, and to be aware of the subtle things that are happening in this present moment.
3. Concentrate on any aspect of the present: your breathing, the sensations in your body, a calming thought, word, or object. You may find that other thoughts pop into your mind. Don't worry; this is normal. Try not to dwell on them and just keep focusing on your experience of the present moment.
4. If you are having trouble, try repeating a word or sound, or count your breaths from 1 to 10 and back down to 1.

Deep Breathing: Breathe to fill your body.

1. Lie on your back with a pillow under your head. Bend your knees (or put a pillow under them) to relax your stomach.
2. Rest one hand on your stomach, just below your rib cage.
3. Slowly breathe in through your nose. Your stomach should feel like it is rising.
4. Exhale slowly through your mouth, emptying your lungs completely and letting your stomach fall.
5. Eventually allow your breathing to find a natural, comfortable pace. Repeat until you feel calm and relaxed.

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