



Relaxation Techniques

10 Ways to Ease Stress and Promote Healing

Relaxation is a skill that can be learned and strengthened with practice.

When we intentionally calm the mind and body, we support healing, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being. Inside, you will find 10 simple relaxation techniques designed to help you manage tension, ease discomfort, and feel more centered throughout your day.

Explore the techniques that resonate most with you, and remember — just a few minutes of focused relaxation can make a meaningful difference.



1

Deep Breathing

What is it?

Breathing deeply uses the natural breathing muscle from the diaphragm and releases natural endorphins. Deep breathing from the abdomen promotes the relaxation response.

How to do it

- Sit comfortably.
- Loosen tight clothes from around abdomen.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose, letting your chest and lower belly expand. Breathe out slowly through your mouth or nose, whichever feels more comfortable, and let your abdomen fall back toward your back. Balance the time for inhaling and exhaling with a slight pause between.
- Be aware of how your inhalations and exhalations feel and sound as they move through your body. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.
- Exhale at a normal rate. Your abdomen should fall toward the back.
- You may think of a word, focus on a sound, or count to help with focus.
- You may place your hand on your chest and abdomen to help with awareness of abdomen rising higher than the chest.

2

Guided Imagery and Visualization

What is it?

Imagery is a mind-body practice that uses the power of imagination to bring about change in physical, emotional, or spiritual dimensions. It may also be called “guided day dreaming.” Images evoke physical and emotional responses and help us understand the meaning of events.

How to do it

- Start with slow abdominal breathing for relaxation.
- Think of a place you enjoy.
- Use all your senses to describe or think of what this place is like.
- With practice, it will become easier to return to this place.
- Several guided imagery resources are available from your care team.

3

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

What is it?

Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and releasing different muscle groups. A person’s attention is drawn to the feelings experienced when a muscle group is relaxed and when it is tensed.

How to do it

- Tense each muscle group for 7 seconds and then relax.
 - Forehead, face, lower face, jaw
 - Neck
 - Hands, forearms
 - Upper arms
 - Chest, shoulders, upper back
 - Thighs, calves, feet
- Ask your care team about additional resources for progressive muscle relaxation.



4

Meditation

What is it?

Meditation is an activity that keeps the attention pleasantly anchored in the present moment. It may involve mental repetition of a word or phrase, a physical repetition or body movement, or focus on breath awareness. Meditation is a mind-body approach that has shown to decrease mind chatter and promote focus and relaxation.

How to do it

- Sit or lie in a comfortable position with a straight spine and let the shoulders drop.
- Close eyes or gaze ahead.
- Focus on full in breath and out breath — notice the sensation of your breath.
- Don't try to change your breath, just notice the “waves”.
- When the mind wanders away from your breath, just return focus to your breath.
- You may add in a word (mantra) or sound with each breath to help with focus i.e. om, calm, peace.

5

Music Therapy and Music Listening

What is it?

Music that promotes relaxation has a regular rhythm (less than 80 beats per minute), no extreme pitch or dynamics, and a melodic sound that is smooth and flowing. It has been used throughout history as a treatment approach.

How to do it

- Consider your music preferences and how and where you like to listen to music (headphones, speaker, etc.).
- Create a playlist of your preferred music or look for playlists for relaxation or stress relief.

6

Simple Massage

What is it?

A technique that uses manual pressure on your skin. It has therapeutic effects on multiple body systems. Massage can promote relaxation and mobility. Massage therapy works with the soft tissues of your body. Soft tissues of the body are muscles, tendons, ligaments, and skin. Many people receive massage to help heal injury, relieve stress and anxiety, improve flow of blood and lymph, reduce muscle tension, promote balance, or reduce muscle soreness.

How to do it

- Choose a comfortable and relaxing environment. Position your body so the area being massaged is supported and at ease.
- Apply oil or lotion and use long, smooth strokes, gentle kneading, or small circular motions over tight areas.
- You may use firm pressure, but do not cause pain. Avoid areas that are swollen, injured, or irritated.
- Focus on hands or feet for ease and relaxation. A hand or foot massage can be a simple, accessible way to promote comfort and relaxation.
- Ask your care team for resources if you are interested in a therapeutic massage.

7

Pain Management Imagery

Creating the scale

- Settle in and relax.
- Take slow deep abdominal breaths.
- Picture an intensity scale (0-10) and focus it clearly in your mind. You can use another image of a scale that can be adjusted if it comes to you, such as a thermostat.
- Focus on the number that relates to the pain/discomfort and see it on the scale.

Adjusting the number on the scale

- Slowly begin to decrease the number.
- Notice how the pain decreases as the number lowers.
- Slowly continue to lower the number.

Locking in the new level

- Notice the pain continues to decrease to the point it is tolerable. You will know what number is right.
- Notice you feel minimal discomfort or none.
- When you reach the final number, imagine locking it in place.



8

Daily Self Care Technique

Find a comfortable position and breathe

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
- Choose a word that helps you feel relaxed (for example - peace, calm, ocean).
- Close your eyes.

Release tension with your breath

- Relax all your muscles, starting at your feet and moving up to your face.
- Breathe in and out through your nose. Become aware of your breathing.
- As you breathe out, say your word silently to yourself.
- When you notice your mind has wandered, gently and kindly bring your focus back to your word and your breath.

Make the time

- If possible, continue for 5-10 minutes.
- Practice twice daily or when you start feeling stress or tension.

9

Centering and Intention Setting Technique

Centering and setting intention are methods used to be calm physically, mentally, or emotionally and are used to prepare for performing an activity. There are several ways to center and set an intention for the day or for an activity. Here are a few examples.

Example

- Pause for a moment.
- Set aside concerns or worries about the past or future.
- Breathe deeply and slowly.
- Focus on a word and feeling such as calm, compassion, acceptance, love or joy.
- Set your intention for being present in the moment.

Example – ABC

- A: Awareness of your body (start at toes and go up).
- B: Balance (feet flat on floor, spine rising straight).
- C: Centered (connecting to something or someone you care about).

Example

- Breath In – Calm; Breath Out – Tension
- Breath In – Be; Breath Out – Still
- Breath In – I am; Breath Out – Here Now

10

Positive Affirmations

Affirmations are positive statements that describe a desired situation. Affirmations are repeated many times to affect the subconscious mind and trigger it into positive action. To improve the effectiveness of the affirmations, repeat them with attention, conviction, interest and desire.

The power of affirmations can help you to refocus your life. By stating what you want to be true in your life, you mentally and emotionally see and feel it as true, despite of your current circumstances, and attract it into your life.

Examples

- I am healthy and happy.
- My body is healthy and functioning in a very good way.
- I have a lot of energy.
- My mind is calm.
- My thoughts are under my control.
- I radiate love and happiness.
- I am surrounded by love.
- I have the perfect job for me.
- I have good and loving relations with my wife/husband and family.
- I have a wonderful and satisfying job.
- Everything is getting better every day.

Think of your own affirmations and write them down.





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