

A Few Relaxation Exercises

BREATH COUNTING: If possible, close your eyes. Begin to count your breaths* in and out. Try to feel your whole torso moving in 3 dimensions as you breathe. Example: Breathe in for 2 counts, then out for 4. When that feels comfortable, increase the counts: in for 3, out for 5. When that feels comfortable, increase the counts: in for 4, out for 6, etc. Do this for about 5-10 minutes; see how slowly you can go.

CONSTRUCTIVE REST: Lie on your back on the floor, knees bent and together, arms crossed over chest, head supported (about 1" thick cushion). In this position you can relax every major muscle in your body. Begin to slow down and deepen your breathing*. Imagine a comforting, warm shower massage flowing systematically over your muscles; Feel each group of muscles relax—this should take about 10 minutes.

BEAUTIFUL PLACE: Close your eyes. Imagine being in a beautiful place, perhaps real or perhaps fantasy. In this pace you feel happy and secure. Spend about 1 minute to really experience the 5 senses in this place:

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What are the smells?

What are the touch sensations?

Are there any flavors?

After about 5 minutes, you'll probably find yourself smiling.

PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION: Close your eyes and place hands over lower abdomen. Begin by slowing down your breathing*. Feel your abdomen expand like a balloon when you inhale, get small and soft on exhaling. Each time you exhale, say to yourself, "Let it go..." Imagine that each time you exhale, your stress is draining away into the earth. Systematically focus your attention on each part of your body: feet, legs, hips, torso, arms, neck, head, and face. Notice any tension in the muscles and "Let it go..." Do this for about 10 minutes twice a day. Eventually, if you practice this, you will just think about "letting go" and you will relax.

LIGHT BREATHING: Close your eyes. Every time you inhale, imagine breathing pure white light into your nose. When you breathe out, the dark cloud of your stress comes out of your mouth. Do this until you feel like you are exhaling pure white light as well.

**Make sure you spend more time exhaling than inhaling or you will get dizzy.*