

Relaxation*



Everyone can teach themselves to relax using the directions below. Everyone can benefit from learning to relax. The following three methods of relaxation and meditation are simple and effective. They should be done once or twice a day. Pick a time and place where you will be left alone. It takes practice to learn relaxation skills.

Roll Breathing

Full, deep breathing is a way to release tension. The purpose of Roll Breathing is to gain the full use of your lungs and get in touch with the rhythm of your breathing. You may sit, stand, or lie down to practice this breathing.

1. Place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. Notice how your hands move as you breathe in and out.
2. Fill your lower lungs by breathing so that the hand on your abdomen goes up when you inhale and the hand on your chest remains still. Do this 8 – 10 times.
3. Inhale into your lower lungs, then inhale into your upper chest. As you do this, your hand on your chest will rise and the hand your abdomen will fall. Practice this breathing for 3 – 5 minutes.

Caution: Some people get dizzy the first few times they try Roll Breathing. If this happens, slow down your breathing. Get up slowly.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Lie down on your back and stretch out comfortably, such as on a carpeted floor. Tense each of the following muscle groups hard, but not to the point of cramping, for 4 – 10 seconds. Then give yourself 10 – 20 seconds to release it and relax. After you have tensed a group, try to keep that group relaxed while you are tensing other groups.

- Hands: Clench them.
- Wrists and forearms: Extend them and bend the hands back at the wrist.
- Biceps and upper arms: Clench your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows and flex you biceps.
- Shoulders: Shrug them (bring your shoulders up towards your ears and let them down).
- Forehead: Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
- Around the eyes and bridge of the nose: Close your eyes as tightly as possible (remove contact lenses).
- Cheeks and jaws: Grin from ear to ear.

Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

continued

- Around the mouth: Press your lips together tightly.
- Back of the neck: Press the back of your head against the floor
- Front of the neck: Touch your chin to your chest.
- Chest: Take a deep breath and hold it, then exhale.
- Back: Arch your back up and away from the floor.
- Stomach: Suck it into a tight knot.
- Hips and buttocks: Squeeze your buttocks together tightly.
- Thighs: Clench them.
- Lower Legs: Point your toes toward your face; then point your toes away and curl them downward at the same time.

Relaxation Response

1. Lie in a place where you can stretch out comfortably. Close your eyes.
2. Begin to relax each set of muscles that you tensed above.
3. Notice your breathing. Breathe from your abdomen. As you exhale, say a calming word to yourself. Repeat this word each time you exhale. Continue this for 10 – 20 minutes. As distracting thoughts and memories enter your mind, don't dwell on them. Allow them to drift away.
4. Sit quietly for several minutes. Then open your eyes.



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