

Relaxation Techniques

Deep abdominal breathing

Place one hand lightly on your stomach, beneath your rib cage

Begin by inhaling slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth
Feel the air slowly filling your lungs to capacity...your abdomen will rise slightly.

When you have taken a full breath, pause for a moment and then exhale slowly through
your mouth or nose. As you exhale let your whole body go limp like a rag doll.

Keep your breathing smooth and regular. You may also want to count to slowly to 4
when inhaling and exhaling to help slow yourself down. If you feel lightheaded stop for
30 seconds before starting again...make sure you are not chest breathing...your abdomen
should be rising slightly, not your chest.

Now that you have a feel and rhythm for deep breathing, we are going to continue this
deep breathing exercise by counting down 10 deep breaths. To keep the rhythm slow and
regular I will count to 4 on both the inhale and the exhale. Remember to pause for a
moment at the top of your inhale. ..If the 4 count doesn't work well for you, the important
thing is that you keep breathing deeply and don't forget to fully relax at the end of each
exhale.

Let's begin...

Inhale 10, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 9, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 8, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 7, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 6, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 5, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 4, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 3, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 2, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Inhale 1, 2, 3, 4 and exhale 1, 2, 3, 4

Now, you are hopefully getting accustomed to what deep breathing and relaxation feels
like....

Muscle relaxation

Now that you have learned to relax through deep breathing, I want to introduce you to a form of deep muscle relaxation. This exercise will take approximately **15 minutes**. You will use the same principles as you did in the abdominal breathing exercise...but instead of going limp like a rag doll...you will tense and relax each muscle group for 8 seconds each...between muscle groups you will relax for 10 seconds as you notice how your muscles feel...so get into a comfortable position and let's begin...

During this exercise you will work your way through each muscle group, starting with the hands, then the arms, the face, neck and back, stomach, buttocks and lower extremities. As you work through each muscle group you will simultaneously, inhale and hold **and** clench the muscle group for 8 seconds. Then you will exhale, letting all the tension melt away as you relax that same muscle group...take note of whether there is any tension left in the muscle group? Notice how the muscle group feels in this fully relaxed position?

Now that you have the basic idea let's begin by taking 3 deep breathes as you learned to do in the previous exercise.

Starting with your hands...Simultaneously, inhale and hold **and** clench your fists for 8 seconds. Now as you exhale, let all the tension melt away as you relax that same muscle group...is there any tension left in your hands? Notice how your hands feel in this fully relaxed position?

Next tighten your biceps by drawing your arms up towards your shoulders – inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Now tighten your triceps by locking your elbows down - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tense your forehead by raising your eyebrows- inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten muscles around your eyes by clenching your eyelids- inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten your jaw by opening your mouth widely - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten muscles in the back of your neck by gently pulling your head back - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten shoulders by raising them up towards your ears - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten shoulder blades by trying to touch them together - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten chest muscles by taking deep breath and holding for 8 seconds - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten stomach by sucking it in - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten buttocks by pulling together and holding - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten thigh muscles - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten calves by raising up on toes or flexing feet towards you - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Tighten feet by curling toes downward - inhale and hold for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now exhale and relax for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Now mentally scan your whole body, looking for other areas of tension that still need to be relaxed... Take a few moments and imagine the tension melting away from those muscle groups where it still might be lingering. If necessary take a few seconds and tense and relax those muscle groups again to further relax them.

Now that you have your breathing and muscle relaxation down , you should be feeling some of the benefits of what relaxation exercises can do for you.