

Some Brief Relaxation Exercises

General Directions:

For all of these exercises, it is best to be seated, eyes closed, feet flat on the floor or crossed at the ankles and hands resting comfortably in the lap. Begin each exercise with a deep breath that you let out gently. As you let it out, feel yourself beginning to relax already.

Gentle Arousal: After the exercise, slowly and gently activate by breathing a little more deeply, wiggling your fingers and toes, and opening your eyes at your own rate.

Exercise I

Tense-Relax (Give general directions) Clench your fists. While keeping them clenched, pull your forearms tightly up against your upper arms. While keeping those muscles tense, tense all the muscles in your legs. While keeping all those tense, clench your jaws and shut your eyes fairly tight – not too tightly. Now, while holding all those tense, take a deep breath and hold it for 5 seconds Then, let everything go all at once. Feel yourself letting go of all your tensions. Just enjoy that for a minute, as your muscles let go more and more. Actually, if we had a finely-tuned electromyograph hooked up to you measuring the level of tension in your muscles, it would show that you relax more and more and more for up to 20 minutes. Just enjoy focusing, gently, on the letting go (arouse gently).

Exercise II

Heaviness and Warmth (Give general directions first) Just imagine that your feet and legs are getting heavier and heavier and warmer and warmer. It's almost as if you are wearing some lead boots. Feet and legs, heavy and warm, heavy and warm. Now, imagine your stomach and the whole central portion of your body getting warm . . . warm and relaxed. My forehead is cool . . . cool . . . relaxed and cool. And my breathing is regular . . . easy and regular. Just feel the warm and heaviness spread all over the body (Arouse gently).

Exercise III

Breathing Your Body Away (General directions first) Gently focus your attention on your feet and legs. Be aware of all the sensations from your feet and legs. Now, inhale a long, slow breath, and as you do, breathe in all the sensations from your feet and legs. In your mind's eye, imagine that you are erasing those part of your body. Now, as you exhale, breathe out all those sensations. Once again, breathe in your feet and legs, and exhale it from your body, so that, in your mind, you can see only from your hips up. Now, with another long breath, breathe in all the parts of your body to your neck, and, as you exhale, breathe it away Now, beginning with your fingers, breathe in your fingers, hands, wrists and arms, and exhale them away. . . . Now, your next and head . . . as you breathe in, imagine your neck and head being erased, and now breathe them away. Let's go back over the whole body in one breath, beginning with the feet. A long slow breath in, and as you do, erase any little parts that still remain. Now, a long slow breath out, as you exhale all the remaining parts. Now, just sit quietly for a minute and enjoy feeling yourself relax deeper and deeper (gently arouse).

Exercise IV

A Favorite Scene, Place or Person (General directions given first) As you're sitting quietly, recall, in your mind, the most relaxing thought you can. Perhaps it's a favorite place (a vacations spot or favorite retreat of some sort; or it might be a person with whom you feel at peace, or some scene – a meadow, or whatever works for you). Take a few seconds to get that in mind Now, see or imagine that in your mind. Be sure to

feel those good feelings you have when you are in that place. Just let them take over your whole awareness. . . . If your thoughts wander, just take them gently back to that peaceful, relaxing place (gently arouse).

Exercise V

Ideal Relaxation (general direction given first) With your eyes closed, take a moment to create, in mind's eye, an ideal spot for relaxation. You can make it any place real or imagine and furnish it any way that you want. Wear the clothes you are most comfortable in. Enjoy, now, in your own mind, going there. You'll want to feel at ease and mellow as you lounge in your ideal place for relaxation. Just enjoy it for a minute. . . (Gentle arousal)

Exercise VI

Cool Air In, Warm Air Out (general directions first) With your eyes closed, and while relaxing quietly, gently focus on the end of your nose. As you breathe in, feel the air coming in the top of your nose. As you breathe out, feel the air coming out of the top of your nose Notice that the air coming in is cooler than the air going out. . . Gently focus on the cool air coming in, and the warmer air going out. As your attention wanders, just gently bring it back to the tip of your nose. . . (Gentle arousal)

Exercise VII

Focus on a Word (general directions first) Pick some word which has "good" vibrations associated with it for you – a word which you associate with relaxation, comfort, peace. It could be a word such as "serenity" or "cool, peaceful, joy, free," etc. . . . Now, just let that word hold the center of your thoughts. As your mind wanders to more stressful thoughts, gently bring it back to that word. . . After awhile, perhaps your mind will drift to other gentling, restful thoughts. If so, just let it wander. . . When it does drift to stressful thoughts, back to your original word. (Gentle arousal)

Exercise VIII

Something for Use Anywhere (General directions first) With practice, you will become more adept at relaxing while awake, anywhere. As you do, here's a way to let yourself relax while going about your day. You can do it while walking, sitting in class, taking a test, on a date, etc. First, smile. Yes, smile, to remind yourself that you don't actually have all the cares of the world on your shoulders – only a few of them. Then, take a long deep breath, and let it out. Now, take a second long deep breath and as you let it out, feel yourself releasing the tensions in your mind and in your body. Just let yourself relax more and more, as you continue whatever you were doing. (Gentle arousal)

Sample Relaxation Exercise

- Get yourself as comfortable as you can in the chair in which you are sitting. Close your eyes and breathe deeply – from the stomach. Notice that your muscles are beginning to feel smooth, heavy, and comfortable.
- Focus your attention on your breathing. Exhale slowly. As you exhale, let go of any tensions or negative thoughts you have running through your mind.
- It's nice to know that wherever you are or whatever situation you are in, you can feel this relaxed. By doing what you're doing right now you can recover from what you experience as a stressful situation.
- Now that you have relaxed muscles and are breathing deeply, imagine yourself in a classroom taking an exam. See yourself sitting there breathing as you are right now at your own comfortable space, thinking positive thoughts. You are very much in control. Whenever you exhale feel more serene, calm, and confident.
- You have all the knowledge you need to pass this exam. You have studied using the best techniques you know. You are fully prepared. You passed the last exam and you did fine. You will be able to pass this exam, too.
- See yourself reading each problem, one at a time, slowly and carefully, moving smoothly through each item on the exam. You have the ability to do well on this exam.
- Take a moment and experience how calm and regular your breathing is and how confident you feel. After you have counted five breaths open your eyes and feel relaxed and alert.