

Quick Relaxation Techniques

Deep Breathing: Take a deep breath. Hold it for about 3 seconds, then let it all out at once (with a sigh it might feel even better!). As you let it out, let your jaw relax, your shoulders relax, and think “calm.” Let your teeth remain slightly apart (we should go through the day with enough space between our teeth for a small pencil).

Tense-Release: Tense yourself all over, one part at a time. Pull your toes up as if to touch your shins and hold it. Tense your thighs . . . your buttocks and back . . . tense your arms and fists . . . take a deep breath and hold it. Clench your jaws and close your eyelids tight. Hold yourself tense all over for four or five seconds. Then (here’s the really important part) let it all go at once. Feel the tension leave each of those parts of your body.

Cool Air In—Warm Air Out: With your eyes closed, shift your attention to the tip of your nose. As you breathe in, become aware of the air coming in your nostrils. As you breathe out, be aware of the sensations of the air passing back out. Perhaps you notice that the air coming in tends to be cooler and the air you breathe out tends to be warmer. Just be aware of cool air coming in and warm air going out.

Heavy Feet: Imagine that your feet and legs are getting heavier and heavier with every breath out. It’s almost as if you were wearing lead boots. Your feet are getting heavy. Your legs are getting heavy. Your body is feeling heavy. This is moving up to your back, your shoulders, and arms. Imagine this for a few seconds.

Warm Hands: Visualize your hands as warm, relaxed and warm. You might imagine them in a bucket of warm water, near a fire, or in warm and woolly gloves. Perhaps you can even begin to feel the blood flowing down your arms into your hands. Your hands are warm . . . relaxed and warm.

Breathing Tensions Away: Gently focus your attention on your feet. As you take in slow, deep breaths, imagine collecting all of your tension in your feet and legs, breathing them into your lungs, and expelling them as you exhale. Then, with the second deep breath, inhale all the tension in your trunk, hands, and arms, and expel that also. With a third deep breath, collect and expel all the tension in your neck and head. With practice, you may be able to collect the tension from your entire body with one deep inhalation.

Equalized Breathing: Take four seconds to breathe in and four seconds to breathe out. Repeat this exercise 4 or 5 times.

Abdominal Breathing: Place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your navel. Breathe so that only the hand on your navel moves—as you inhale, your hand moves in; as you exhale, your hand moves out. The upper hand does not move.

Ideal Relaxation: With your eyes closed, take a moment to create an ideal spot for relaxation. This can be any place you want it to be—real or imagined. In your mind’s eye, look around your ideal spot and imagine how it smells and feels to be there. Imagine yourself there in comfort and relaxed. Once you have created this place, you can go back there for 15 seconds or so anytime you feel the need to relax.

Smooth Sailing in your own Hand: Pick an interesting sentence and write it out in longhand very slowly, making sure that every letter looks just the way you want it to look. During a test, rewrite a challenging question so that it appears more inviting.

<http://www.dso.iastate.edu/asc/academic/handouts/pdf/relaxation.pdf> retrieved on February 20, 2007
<http://www.law.suffolk.edu/offices/stuservices/asp/quick.cfm> retrieved on February 20, 2007