

HOW CAN RELAXATION HELP ME?

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Relaxation is restoring to the body and mind. In times of stress we quickly use up energy we need to accomplish activities both mental and physical. If we are not getting enough rest and relaxation we can fatigue mind and body. The same is true of nutrition; if we are not eating properly we can reduce the amount of energy we have to handle every day stresses. Sometimes, in times of stress we will avoid treating ourselves to some relaxation time because we don't feel we have the time to rest; however, these are the times we need relaxation most. Brief moments of deep relaxation can go a long way in helping to restore our minds and bodies. Relaxation exercises can come in very handy on these occasions. When you feel overextended and overwhelmed, pause to relax and compose your self. How you do this will be very specific to your personality and your learning style.

Some people are visual learners and it is easy for them to picture very relaxing scenes in their imagination. Other people are kinesthetic learners, meaning that it is easy for them to feel the different parts of the body, or even to feel different emotions. It is important to find a relaxation exercise that suits your type of learning style. Below I will demonstrate two types of meditation. See which style suits you. For both meditations allow yourself to be in a comfortable position, in a place where you will not be disturbed for a while. Read through the exercises below and then put the paper down and practice them. Allow yourself to be still, body—and mind.

Visualization: Inhale deeply slowly and easily; then exhale slowly. As you exhale be aware of any muscle tension that you may feel. Then inhale again and as you exhale, close your eyes. In your imagination picture the color blue. See if you can see this color vividly. Then imagine that the color blue turns into a scene of the sky on a warm sunny day. In the sky are a few clouds just lazily drifting by. Unhurriedly inhale and exhale. Continue to imagine places that specifically help you to relax—try to imagine that you are actually there, in the places you are visualizing. Try to see the scenes in great detail.

Muscle relaxation: Inhale deeply slowly and easily; then exhale slowly. As you exhale be aware of any muscle tension that you may feel. Begin to feel the weight of the body resting on the surface beneath you. As you become aware of leisurely breathing, go through each part of your body on part at a time. Unhurriedly, be aware of relaxing the muscles of your foot, then your ankles, then your calves, your thighs, buttocks and pelvis. Continue on like this and go through, relaxing, all the parts of your body. Also include your mind in this process: relax your brain. Following this exercise, lie still and be aware of the quiet within the body—allow your body to rest and let your mind daydream for a while.

Come out of the meditation by becoming aware of the position of your body and then expand your awareness to your surroundings (the sights and sounds in the environment you are in).