

Quick Relaxation Techniques

Different relaxation techniques appeal to different people. Please try out each technique and rate it out of 10, then choose the one(s) that suit you best.

<i>Whole body tension</i>		Score out of 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tense everything in your whole body, stay with that tension. ■ Hold it as long as you can without feeling pain. ■ Slowly release the tension and very gradually feel it leave your body. Repeat three times. 		
<i>Imagine air as a cloud</i>		Score out of 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Open your imagination and focus on your breathing. ■ As your breathing becomes calm and regular, imagine that the air comes to you as a cloud. ■ It fills you and goes out. ■ You may imagine the cloud to be a particular colour. 		
<i>Pick a spot</i>		Score out of 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With your head level and body relaxed, pick a spot to focus on (eyes open at this point). ■ When ready, count 5 breaths backward: with each breath allow your eyes to close gradually. ■ Concentrate on each breath. ■ When you get to 1, your eyes will be closed. Focus on the feelings of relaxation. 		
<i>Counting ten breaths back</i>		Score out of 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Allow yourself to feel passive and indifferent, counting each breath slowly from 10 to 1. ■ With each count, allow yourself to feel heavier and more relaxed. ■ With each exhale, allow the tension to leave your body. 		
<i>Transformations: pick one that works or make up your own</i>		Score out of 10
<p>When you think of images like....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tightly twisted ropes ■ Feel of cold, harsh wind ■ Hard, cold wax ■ Tense, red muscles 	<p>Imagine....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ The twisted ropes untwisting ➢ The cold wind becoming warm and soft ➢ The wax softens and melts ➢ The red muscles soften or lighten to pink 	
<i>Affirmations: pick one that works or make up your own</i>		Score out of 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Breathe deeply and slowly.... ■ Let the tension flow away.... ■ I am calm & relaxed, ready for anything 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ This discomfort will pass.....let it go. ➢ I have the power to handle this. ➢ Relax the jaw, lower the shoulders. 	

GP Notes: Quick Relaxation Techniques



Background Notes for Prescribers

Relaxation has been described as 'a state of consciousness characterised by feelings of peace and release from tension, anxiety and fear'. The term is usually taken to mean either lack of muscle tension or lack of inner 'mental tension'.

Early relaxation techniques often involved progressive muscle relaxation with attention to breathing, such as Jacobsen's progressive relaxation, first described in the late 1930s.

It is now recognised that there is a myriad of techniques to suit different personality types and problems. Some people also encounter problems with 'letting go' and can become panicky when they try and relax. This needs to be discussed and a different type of relaxation technique considered.

It is helpful to find out what happens to the individual when they are tense:

- *How does he/she know they are tense?*
- *What happens first? What next?*
- *What helps? What doesn't?*
- *Have they had problems with previous attempts at relaxation?*

It is also helpful to know the individual's style: *Do they like to picture things? Read things? Listen to things? Do something?*



Useful Resources

Barlow, DH, & Rapee, RM (1997). **Mastering Stress: A Lifestyle Approach**. Sydney: Lifestyle Press.

King, Petra. The tapes and CDs by Petrea King entitled **Relaxation, Learning to meditate, Soar like an eagle**, and **Sleep: A guide to deep and restful sleep** are all helpful and available on her website: www.questforlife.com.au.

Payne, R (2000). **Relaxation techniques: A practical handbook for the health care professional**. London: Churchill Livingstone.

Treatment Protocol Project (2004). **Management of Mental Disorders**, 4th Edition, Sydney: World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Evidence in Mental Health Policy. *Chapter 4 on Anxiety Disorders, which also gives some strategies for addressing barriers (p 219)*.

Wilson, P (1995). **Instant Calm, and Calm at Work**. Both by Ringwood: Penguin.

The progressive relaxation technique is well described at www.crufad.org and www.gpcare.org sites in the information section supporting the provision of mental health care and focussed psychological strategies under the *Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care* initiative.