

Quick relaxation techniques for healthcare workers

COVID-19 mental health resources

Pressure on healthcare workers has increased exponentially as a result of COVID-19. Relaxation techniques have long been prescribed as an effective way to find release from feelings of tension, anxiety and fear.

This fact sheet outlines a range of quick relaxation techniques that can be practiced in the workplace or at home. Different techniques appeal to different people.

Please try out each technique and rate it out of 10, then choose the one(s) you like most. It's best to practice relaxation techniques when your stress levels are low, that way you'll know what to do when tensions are high.

Whole body tension	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.	
Imagine air as a cloud	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	
Pick a spot	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 point).• When ready, count five breaths backward. With each breath allow your eyes to close gradually.• Concentrate on each breath• When you get to one, your eyes will be closed. Focus on the feelings of relaxation.	
Counting ten breaths back	Score out of 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow yourself to feel passive and indifferent, counting each breath slowly from 10 to one.• With each count, allow yourself to feel heavier and more relaxed.• With each exhale, allow the tension to leave your body.	
Affirmations: pick one that works or make up your own	Score out of 10
When you think of images like.... Let the tension flow away.... I am calm and relaxed and ready for anything...	This discomfort will pass, let it go... I have the power to handle this... Relax the jaw, lower the shoulders....

Transformations: pick one that works or make up your own

Score out of 10

When you think of images like....
Tightly twisted ropes
Feel of cold, harsh wind
Hard, cold wax
Tense, red muscles

Imagine....
The twisted ropes untwisting
The cold wind becoming warm and soft
The wax softens and melts
The red muscles soften or lighten to pink

5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you will purposefully take in the details of your surroundings using each of your senses. Strive to notice the small details that your mind would usually tune out, such as distant sounds, or the texture of an ordinary object. This technique is best used when you have a little more time.

What are 5 things you can see?

- Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.

Score out of 10

What are 4 things you can feel?

- Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.

What are 3 things you can hear?

- Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.

What are 2 things you can smell?

- Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.

What is 1 thing you can taste?

- Carry gum, lollies, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavours.

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