

# Introduction to relaxation



A short introduction to using relaxation for stress management.

## Relaxation tips

Allow ample time to practice relaxation to ensure it isn't rushed.

Practice relaxation often – aim for once a day. Incorporate practice in to your routine.

Remove distractions. Avoid practicing when hungry or just after eating. Put your phone on silent. Make space away from pets or children (or include them in your practice).

Do what works for you. There are some examples provided but always choose what works best for you.

Create a relaxing environment, e.g. find a quiet place, close the curtains, dim the lights, light a candle.

Soothe your senses – vision, e.g. light a candle.

Soothe your senses -hearing, e.g. play some tranquil music or sounds; sit in silence.

Soothe your senses -touch, e.g. wear soft bed socks or an oversized jumper.

Soothe your senses – smell, e.g. use essential oils such as lavender, known for its calming properties.

Heighten your senses, e.g. wear a silk eye pillow or close your eyes whilst listening to relaxing music.

Ensure you make yourself warm and cosy before you begin your practice as relaxation slows your breathing and heart rate, which can cause you to feel cold.

Try to breathe through your nose, breathing slowly and regularly. Place your hands on your stomach to feel the movement with in and out breaths. Quick, shallow breathes should be avoided as this is how we breathe when stressed and this breathing pattern can cause us to feel dizzy or faint and exacerbate anxiety. You may benefit from trying this breathing, to get used to it, before you begin your practice.

Adopt a relaxed posture. Drop your shoulders, sit back in your chair, unclench your fists.

Allow yourself plenty of time to come around slowly after relaxation.

Incorporate relaxation in to everyday life, e.g. inject pleasure and treats in to your routine, take short breaks in your day.

## How does relaxation help?

When we're stressed the muscles in our body tense up. The tension causes other uncomfortable physical symptoms e.g. aches and pains, tightness in the chest. Physical tension also leads us to feel tired.

By learning to 'turn on' the symptoms of relaxation we can 'turn off' the symptoms of tension. Relaxation and tension are two sides of the same coin: we can't be relaxed and tense at the same time.

Relaxation is a skill. Practice relaxation exercises often and gradually build them in to daily life so that when something stressful happens you are thoroughly familiar with the skills and can put them in to practice in the midst of difficulty.