Relaxation Techniques

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Your Workplace Wellness Program
Our Main Objectives:

• For you to experience 8 different relaxation techniques

• For you to leave this session with a doable plan for incorporating periods of relaxation into your day
So How Do You Relax?
Relaxation Technique #1: Take a Deep Breath!!

Basic Abdominal/Diaphragmatic Breath

-Consider trying the Ujayi, or Ocean-sounding breath-

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Relaxation: WHAT IS IT?

• The state of being free from tension and anxiety
• The restoration of equilibrium following disturbance
• The process of effectively moving the mind/body from the stress response to the relaxation response
Benefit of relaxation: The Relaxation Response

- Decreased heart rate
- Decreased blood pressure
- Slowed breath rate
- Decreased need for oxygen
- Increased blood flow
- Reduced muscle tension
- Decreased incidence of headaches and muscle pain
- Fewer emotional responses such as anger, crying, anxiety, apprehension, and frustration
- Improved concentration
- Better ability to handle problems

Relaxation Techniques Can Help Relieve Pain

- A meta-analysis studied research literature to see if muscle and joint pain and associated symptoms could be reduced through relaxation techniques.

- Results: musculoskeletal pain intensity decreased; anxiety, depression and fatigue related to fibromyalgia decreased; mobility, balance and coordination increased.

- Relaxation Techniques reduce pain and result in:
  - an increase in a sense of personal control
  - a decrease in medication and health-care costs

Just as we have a stress response, we also have a relaxation response. We have the power to reset our bodies almost instantly.
Tips for all relaxation techniques:

• Not all techniques work for every person—experiment to see what’s best for you

• Try each method several times

• Give yourself a minimum of 10-15 minutes/day to practice a relaxation activity

• Seclude yourself where you will not be interrupted

• Minimize background noises

• Approach each technique without expectations

• Keep an open mind
Tips for Facilitating Relaxation

1. Use a mental device to shift your brain away from mind chatter and towards a steady, calm focus
2. Allow yourself to have a passive attitude
3. Assume a comfortable position
4. Provide yourself with a quiet, distraction-free environment
Relaxation Sensations

- Tingling
- Warmth
- Coolness
- Floating
- Heaviness
- Pleasant numbness
- Distortions in your sense of time
Relaxation Technique #2: Stretch—and connect your breathing to your movement. Do this in such a way that it feels good and makes you happy to be alive!
The Joy of Breathing

• Feel life-giving oxygen fully entering your body on the inhale. Intentionally stretch your lungs open and rejoice in your ability to breathe.

• Lengthen your exhale, letting all tension flow out of the body.

• Pause slightly after exhaling, and let yourself feel a sense of peace.
Relaxation Technique #3: Try a mantra or affirmative phrase with your breathing

- Breathing in, I know I am breathing in
- Breathing out, I know I am breathing out
- Breathing in, I grow calm
- Breathing out, I smile
Why?

- Mindfulness, breath awareness, and mantras all help to calm the “monkey mind”

- unsettled
- restless
- capricious
- whimsical
- fanciful
- inconstant
- confused
- indecisive
- uncontrollable
Relaxation Technique #4: Take a 60-second vacation
Where do you want to go?

• Use all your senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, taste
Relaxation Technique #5: Try Some Chair/Office Yoga

• Move mindfully, connect with your breath
  - modified Sun Salutation (using 5 complete breaths)
  - seated hamstring stretch
  - seated figure 4
  - standing balance (tree pose)
  - standing quadriceps stretch (foot on chair) with backbend
  - warrior II
  - 5-pointed star to seated meditation
Relaxation Technique #6: Do it yourself MASSAGE

- Try acupressure points on hands, wrists, ears
- Try a face massage
- Try cupping your eyes
- Try massaging your neck and shoulder on one side with the opposite hand
Relaxation Technique #7: Progressive Relaxation

- A technique designed specifically to reduce muscle tension through focused attention
- Also called Progressive Neuromuscular Relaxation
Muscle Physiology

• A motor unit is composed of a motor nerve and muscle fibers
• Muscle fibers contract (shorten) when they receive a message from the Central Nervous System
• Fibers generally relax again until they receive another impulse
Many muscles remain contracted because the nervous system is constantly sending fight-or-flight messages when we are stressed. 😞
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Helps your body learn the difference between tension and relaxation
- Activates the parasympathetic nervous system by consciously contracting and then relaxing the muscles
- A relaxat
How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation

• Contract a group of muscles and hold for ~6 seconds
• Release and relax for at least 3 deep breaths
• Repeat for each group of muscles, or:
  - feet, back of legs, fronts of legs, buttocks, abdomen, upper back, arms and hands, jaw and face
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Sit on a chair.

2. Scrunch your face. Count to 3. 1,2,3... Take a deep breath. Relax.

3. Tense your arms. Count to 3. 1,2,3... Take a deep breath and relax.

4. Tense your arms and shoulders. Count to 3. 1,2,3... Take a deep breath. Relax.

5. Tense your legs. Count to 3. 1,2,3... Take a deep breath. Relax.

6. Breathe in relaxation breathe out tension.
Relaxation Technique #8: Meditation

• A conscious mental method of systematically allowing the mind to focus on a single thought, word, or space
• The mind thinks more clearly
• Relaxation is the result
Meditation is a great way to recover and restore balance to your life
Many Types of Meditation:

- Transcendental meditation
- Zen (Zazen) meditation
- Vipassana
- Mindfulness meditation
- Loving-kindness (metta) meditation
- Vedic meditation
- Chakra meditation
- Kundalini meditation
- I am (atma vichara) meditation
- Qigong meditation
- Christian meditation (e.g. contemplative prayer)
Meditation techniques

• Focus on the breath. Think only of this inhale, then think only of the next exhale, and so on.

• Use a slow counting pattern for each breath. E.g. inhale to the count of 4; exhale to the count of 5

• Count slowly backwards with each breath. E.g. start with 10—inhale and exhale, then 9—inhale and exhale, etc.

• Use a mantra or phrase
Mantra

• A repeated sound, word, or phrase used as a point of focus during meditation

• Examples:
  - peace (inhale), love (exhale)
  - calm (inhale), smile (exhale)
  - om (peace or oneness)
for Meditation

• **EXAMPLES:**

  • Peace is my true nature
  
  • I am an eternal spark of life energy
  
  • I find deep peace and contentment within
  
  • I am awake to the beauty of life
Meditation Tips

• Sit tall with a long spine; sit with dignity
• Use a cushion or block to sit on, or sit on a chair with both feet grounded
• Eyes closed
• Hands in a comfortable position (mudra), generally with palms up
Loving-kindness meditation (mettas)

- Usually silently repeated all the way through 3 times: 1) for yourself—"I", 2) for someone close to you or who is in need—"you", 3) for a larger group—"we".

- May I be healthy and strong
- May I be happy and peaceful
- May I be free from inner and outer harm
- May I take care of myself with wisdom, love, joy, and compassion
What’s Your Plan for Relaxation?

WE COVERED:
1. Deep, relaxing, mindful breathing.
2. Simple stretching
3. Using a mantra or phrase to calm your mind while deep breathing
4. Taking a 60-second vacation
5. Chair/ office yoga
6. DIY massage
7. Progressive muscle relaxation
8. Meditation
Make a Plan!

1. Write down when and where you could do one or more of these techniques tomorrow.

2. Start with a shorter duration—how much time will you take? Do you need a timer? How many times per day?

3. What relaxation technique(s) will you do?

4. How will you remind yourself to do a relaxation technique tomorrow and on other days?

5. How can you remind yourself to practice mindful breathing throughout the day?
“May the light within me honor the light within you”