

Relaxation Techniques

You can do these relaxation techniques with your child. These techniques can work with all ages.

Quick Relaxation

Loosen your clothing and get comfortable.

Tighten the muscles in your toes. Hold for a count of 10. Relax and enjoy the sensation of release from tension.

Flex the muscles in your feet. Hold for a count of 10. Relax.

Move slowly up through your body- legs, abdomen, back, neck, face- contracting and relaxing muscles as you go.

Breathe deeply and slowly.

Long-Term Relaxation

Get in a comfortable position. Minimally tighten your right fist so that you feel only the smallest amount of tension. Hold it at this level. Be sure you continue to breathe... Now let go and relax... Observe the difference in feelings between the right and left arm and fist.

Now minimally tighten your left fist. Hold at this level so that you just feel the tightening... Let go and relax. Let the relaxation spread through the arms and the rest of the body.

Now tighten ever so slightly the following parts of your body. (Each time tighten only to the point at which you can observe tension, where you become conscious of or can "feel" the tension. Hold the tensions at that level, and be sure you tighten only the intended muscle while the rest of the body stays quiet and relaxed. Be sure you continue to breathe. Each time you let go, let those parts relax further and further.) Tighten ever so slightly your scalp... let go and relax... Let the face become smooth and soft... Let the eyes sink into their sockets... Now slightly tighten the throat and neck. Hold it... Let go and relax.

While continuing to breathe, minimally tighten the triceps. Be sure the neck eyes and tongue are relaxed... Let go.

Raise your shoulders to your ears minimally. Be sure the neck stays loose. Observe how the shoulders feel different from the rest of the body... Let go and relax. Feel the relaxation sinking through the body... Minimally tighten the stomach. Keep breathing... Let go and relax. Minimally tighten the buttocks... Let go and relax. Minimally tighten the feet, calves, and thighs... Let go and relax. Let yourself reach an even deeper level of relaxation, a calmness and serenity.

Now minimally tense every muscle in your body so that you just feel the minimum tension... jaws... eyes... shoulders... arms... chest... back... legs... stomach... Be sure you keep breathing. Feel the minimum tension in every part... Let your whole body relax. Feel a wave of calmness as you stop tensing.

Now, with your eyes closed, take a deep breath and hold it. Note all the minimum tensions... Exhale and feel the relaxation and calmness developing... Note the feeling of heaviness.

The following are simple meditation exercises. If you are interested in more complex processes and visualizations, many books and audio tapes are available.

Breathing

Focusing on the breath is one of the most common and fundamental techniques for accessing the meditative state. Breath is a deep rhythm of the body that connects us intimately with the world around us. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and regularly, and observe your breath as it flows in and out of your body. Give your full attention to the breath as it comes in, and full attention to the breath as it goes out. Whenever you find your attention wandering away from your breath, gently pull it back to the rising and falling of the breath. Inhale through your nose slowly and deeply, feeling the lower chest and abdomen inflate like a balloon. Hold for five seconds. Exhale deeply, deflating the lower chest and abdomen like a balloon. Hold for five seconds. Do this three or four times, then allow your breathing to return to a normal rhythm. You will begin to feel a change come over your entire body. Gradually you will become less aware of your breathing, but not captured in your stream of thoughts. You will become more centered inward. You will just "be there."

Listening

Sound entrains us in the busy world, but it also whispers of breeze and birds and children playing. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and regularly, and separate from the chatter of the stream of thoughts which flow through your mind. As your mind quiets and you relax, become aware of the variety of sounds which surround you. There is no need to do anything but listen. Listen with your ears; listen with your heart. Let your focus gently float among the sounds of the world. Gradually you will flow inward, toward your center. Eventually you will not hear anything.

Deep Centering

This exercise involves going into the very center of your being. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and regularly, and imagine that you are going deep, deep into a well within your center. Visualize that this beautiful, deep well goes infinitely down and down. Breathe in as you descend, and absorb all the cool, soothing, healing energy that is buried deep in this bountiful well. Breathe out as you descend, and expel all the negative thoughts and energy which you have accumulated during your day. Your deep inner world has its own essence, its own reality, its own light. Feel the silence, peace, and calm; no noise can reach you here, no words, no sound. Breathe deeply and slowly, experiencing your deepest, most serene essence in the silence of your deep well.

Connecting

This exercise provides balance and connection upward and downward.

Close our eyes and breathe deeply and regularly. Visualize clean white light pouring from above down into the top of your head, down through your body, and out your feet into the center of the earth. As the light flows through you, allow it to illuminate and cleanse every cell of your body. Imagine every cell bright and alive with light. Visualize bright clear emerald light coming up from the earth, into your feet, up your legs, up your back, out the top of your head. Allow it to swirl through every cell, healing and nourishing and connecting you intimately to the very core of the earth of which you are a part.

Now allow both lights to flow through you, white from above and green from below, and combine them in a bright blend throughout your being. Feel the connection to the earth and the heavens, feel the calm nourishment of the energy, feel that the universe is truly your home.

Mantra

Whether spoken or not, words and sounds have vibrations which can be conducive to meditation. Close your eyes and breathe deeply and regularly. Focus on a word or phrase which has meaning to you. It could be a mantra, a name, or a concept which has special power or significance. Repeat the word in your mind with each exhalation. When your mind wanders, gently return it to the word as it repeats with your breath.

References:

<http://wso.williams.edu/orgs/peerh/stress/relax.html>
<http://www.ahealingplace.org/meditation/medexercises.html>

<http://www.tlcinstitute.org>

This information is made available courtesy of The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC), a non-profit 501(c)3 program of Children's Home of Detroit (CHD). If you have questions that you would like to ask our TLC Certified Trauma Specialist on staff, or would like a recommendation for a TLC Certified Trauma Specialist in your area, please call TLC toll-free at 877-306-5256 or email us at steele@tlcinst.org

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