

## The Art of Relaxation

Important points  
about  
deep relaxation  
and  
stress

## Deep relaxation

- Rapid fall in blood pressure and pulse rate.
- Drop in muscle tension.
- Revitalisation of nerve centres.
- Conservation of and recourse to vital energy.

## From exterior to interior

- Voluntary sensory motor inhibition:
  - your ‘biological current’ moves from exterior to interior.
  - aware, but not disturbed.
  - no need for a ‘Do Not Disturb’ sign. ☺
  - type of breathing / respiration is important to make the connection to inner vital energy.

## Carried over from interior to exterior

- The benefits:
  - muscle reflexes respond more rapidly to stimuli.
  - tasks are performed more efficiently.
  - less effort required to accomplish things.
  - strength (mental and physical) is evident in thought, word and action.
  - mind-body equilibrium.

## 5 minute relaxation solutions

- **Dead Pose**
- **Deep Breathing**
- **Visual Imagery**
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**
- **Stretching:**
  - Neck Roll**      **Shoulder Shrug**
  - Side Stretch**   **Standing Body Roll**
- **Self-Massage**

## Dead pose

- Lie on your back.
- Stretch the arms and legs gently apart.
- Aim your palms upwards (fingers will naturally curl in).
- Close your eyes.
- Do not move any muscles of the body.
- Remain motionless – as if dead.

## In the dead pose relax ... (let everything sink down)

- Relax your feet and toes, ankles, calves, knees, thighs – feel both your entire legs relaxed.
- Relax your back and spine.
- Relax your internal organs - digestive system, lungs, heart - feel they are getting calm.
- Relax your hands and fingers, wrists, lower arms, elbows, shoulders – feel both your entire arms relaxed.

## Keep relaxing ...

- Relax your neck.
- Feel the flow of relaxation moving up into your face.
- Relax your checks, mouth, lips, nose, ears, eyes – just feel them ‘smooth out’ around you.
- Relax around your forehead and top of your head.
- Imagine your brain is motionless.

## Pay attention to breathing

- While your whole body feels light as a feather, pay attention to your breathing.
  - Breathe slowly and deeply, from the diaphragm.
  - As you inhale – imagine the vital energy coming into every cell of your body.
  - Feel the energy washing away all tensions and negativity.
  - As you exhale – let that energy radiate from every pore of your body.

## Stress Busters DEEP BREATHING

- Close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing - just notice and be aware of it. Don't do anything to change it.
- As you pay attention notice that there are four parts to your breath - the inhalation and then a slight pause, the exhalation and then a slight pause.
- Continue to pay attention to your breathing and notice these four parts.

## Stress Busters DEEP BREATHING

- Now the first thing you can do is to slow your breathing down, taking longer, slower breaths.
- Inhale slowly — then pause just a second or two.
- Exhale slowly — and pause just a second or two, before you inhale again.

## Stress Busters DEEP BREATHING

- As you inhale notice that your abdomen and then chest moves out, your shoulders up.
- As you exhale you let go naturally and relax.
- The breath is a natural process of tension and relaxation.
- As you inhale your body naturally tenses and as you exhale your body naturally relaxes.
- Notice this for awhile as you continue to slow your breathing — notice especially the feeling of letting go – of relaxation as you exhale.

## Stress Busters DEEP BREATHING

- Now to increase this sense of relaxation — put your hand on your abdomen right below your navel.
- When you inhale, start taking the breath slowly all the way from down in your abdomen — like filling a glass of water from the bottom up — filling your abdomen and then your chest — keep the breathing slow and relaxed.
- Then let the glass empty — relaxing your abdomen and chest.

## Stress Busters DEEP BREATHING

- Practice this deep abdominal slow breathing for a while and again notice how when you exhale you let go and relax.
- With each breath as you exhale let the relaxation spread throughout your body.
- Sometimes it is helpful to say the word RELAX to yourself as you exhale.
- There are also mantras or sound vibrations that you can use — they have a special inspiration behind them.

## Stress Busters DEEP BREATHING

- Do this deep breathing for a little while, noticing yourself relax more and more with every breath, every time you inhale and then exhale.
- Now take a few minutes more of breathing, letting yourself bring the relaxation with you, but becoming more alert and finally opening your eyes.

## Stress Busters VISUAL IMAGERY

- Do the deep breathing as explained to relax yourself.
- Then imagine a place where you feel safe, comfortable and relaxed.
- Bring all your senses to that place — see it, hear it, feel it, notice any smells and tastes.
- This place is a haven for you, a place where you feel totally relaxed and comfortable.

## Stress Busters

### VISUAL IMAGERY

- Tell yourself you feel bathed in a sense of peaceful contentment.
- Notice that your 5 senses are calm – sight (eyes), sound (ears), touch (skin), taste (tongue), smell (nose) – they are not running after things in the external world. They are content.
- Enjoy the place for awhile - let yourself feel cared for and relaxed.
- Stay there for awhile before bringing yourself back (about 2 - 5 minutes).

## Stress Busters

### PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- For info on Progressive Muscle Relaxation go to: [www.guidetopsychology.com/pmr.htm](http://www.guidetopsychology.com/pmr.htm)
- Two steps:
  - (a) deliberately tensing muscle groups; and
  - (b) releasing the induced tension.
- After learning the full PMR procedure, spend about 5-10 minutes a day maintaining your proficiency by practicing a shortened form of the procedure. You can do it with the Dead Pose.

## Stress Busters

### PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- As you practice PMR, you simultaneously learn cue-controlled relaxation.
- Ultimately, you will acquire something that can become an indispensable part of your daily life.
- Some people don't like the drudgery that may go with it – but here relaxing music or mantra vibrations can change that.

## Stress Busters

### PHYSICAL STRESS RELIEVERS

- Neck Roll:
  - Lay your head on your right shoulder.
  - Roll your head around so your chin is on your chest and continue rolling to left shoulder.
  - Do these rolls from side to side 8-16 times.
- Shoulder Shrug:
  - Draw a big circle with your shoulders - going forward a few times then back.

## Stress Busters PHYSICAL STRESS RELIEVERS

- **Side Stretch:**
  - With one hand reach up as if you were picking fruit from a tree ahead and far above you.
  - Go from one arm to the other alternating - go slow and do about 6-12 times on each side.
- **Standing Body Roll:**
  - Let your head roll forward until your chin is on your chest.
  - Keep rolling down as your knees begin to bend.
  - When your hands are hanging by your knees, rest there a moment and slowly roll back up.

## Stress Busters SELF MASSAGE

- **Self-Massage:**
  - Use your hands to work on each shoulder.
  - Be gentle but firm, massaging from the shoulder blade, on the shoulder, neck and bottom of the scalp.
- You can give yourself a gentle hand massage all over your body.

## Effective Coping Strategies \* Make Lifestyle Changes \*

- Eat right.
- Avoid use of caffeine, alcohol, & other drugs.
- Exercise.
- Develop & maintain social support.
- Develop life goals - both short & long term.
- Develop a positive, affirming attitude towards yourself and the universe.
- Mental ecology – harmony of mind.

## Symptoms of Anxiety

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless, unsatisfying sleep.
- Excessive worry and difficulty controlling worry.
- Panic.
- Restlessness, feeling on edge.

## Definition of **Stress**

- ✓ When demands exceed one's ability to cope.
  - Due to physical, emotional, academic / work pressures, interpersonal or environmental sources.
  - Poor coping strategies are utilized.
  - May be related to positive or negative events.

## Can you tell when you are **Stressed?**

- Irritability.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Lack of motivation.
- Fatigue.
- Headaches.
- Muscle tension.
- Susceptibility to illness.
- Increase in smoking, using alcohol, or other drugs.
- Mood swings.

## Common sources of **Stress**

- Academic or work pressures.
- Balancing school / work & other demands.
- Financial worries.
- Having a roommate.
- Relationship problems - changes in family or social relationships, break-ups.
- Worries about the future.
- Identity confusion – ' who am I? '.

## Why are people **DISTRESSED?**

- ✓ Under stress, financially & socially.
- ✓ Increased availability & use of drugs.
- ✓ Increased incidence of violence.
- ✓ Terrorism / war.
- ✓ Intrusiveness & isolation from technology.
- ✓ Family instability.
- ✓ More complicated life circumstances.

## How much **Stress** is too much?

- Moderate amounts of stress can be helpful to motivate you ...
- ... but sometimes excessive stress can lead to more complicated problems.

## Stress Scale

- Life events of all kinds have stress associated with them — both positive and negative events.
- To look at your own life events and stress level take the Holmes Rahe Stress Inventory at:

[www.geocities.com/beyond\\_stretched/holmes.htm](http://www.geocities.com/beyond_stretched/holmes.htm)