



Physical and Mental Relaxation

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People mean different things by the word "relax." For some people, relaxing means coming home from work, taking their shoes off, sipping that drink, reading the paper or watching TV. Sitting in the recliner is relaxation for some people while for some relaxation is that nap they sneak in during the day. Not being mad and upset all the time is relaxation for others. Actually, physical and mental relaxation means undoing the physical and mental stress or tension one is experiencing at the time.

There are people who are really apprehensive of the word relaxation. They view it with suspicion and hesitancy. They fear that if they begin to relax, they will become lazy, unproductive, and lose the "fight" in them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Relaxation can nourish you, make you stronger and help you fight better with any challenge/s you might face.

We do not always recognize that we are tense even when we are tense. Most people who are habitually tense have been that way for many years. Tension and stress has become the natural state of their body and mind. They are unaware of the tension they carry it with them day and night, literally, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. If one were to ask them, "Are you tense?" They would say "No! I'm okay," because they have not truly experienced relaxation and thus do not know any different.

Benefits of Relaxation

I often wonder when so many effective relaxation methods are available today, why do people go for sleeping pills and chemical relaxants. Relaxation techniques can help us to sleep and feel better. The effect of sleeping pills and chemical relaxants wears off over time as one develops tolerance for them. "The more you use them, the more you lose them" as the saying goes. With relaxation techniques, the more you use them, the more effective they become. When you can deepen your relaxation, you can enjoy it even more. And unlike the sleeping pills or other chemical relaxants, there are no bad side effects of relaxation!

Regular practice of mental and physical relaxation may help you to breathe more easily and may also relieve part of your breathing discomfort.

I have developed three (3) physical and mental relaxation exercises:

- 1) Full relaxation exercise 15-20 minutes**
- 2) Short relaxation exercise 5-10 minutes (coming soon)**
- 3) Quick relaxation exercise 1-2 minutes (coming soon)**

It takes about 15 to 20 minutes to do a **full relaxation** session. In the beginning, it is more effective to learn relaxation by using full relaxation methods. If the stress level, pain or another type of challenge is really high, do two or three full sessions a day. One session a day is good, two times better and three times is excellent.

Once basic relaxation skills are acquired, you may practice **short relaxation** session for 5-10 ten minutes for most of the time and do full relaxation methods once or twice a week.

As short methods are learned, **quick relaxation** method can be practiced many times a day and as time permits. Practice full and short methods frequently. Quick methods take the "wind out of the sail" of the stress ship. When you are actually in the middle of a challenging situation and things are happening, you can apply quick methods right then and there, in the face of the situation.

Record and Play

You may tape the scripts of the relaxation sessions in your own voice and play them during your relaxation session. After sufficient practice these words will become part of you and then you wouldn't need to play the tape.

Full Relaxation Method (15-20 minutes)

Preparation for Relaxation

Relaxation exercise can be done lying down or sitting down. If you prefer to lie down, make sure you have proper pillow support under your neck and lower back or knees if needed. Lie if you prefer, or sit, make yourself comfortable. Sit with arms and hands in the lap or the thighs, back, neck and head straight but relaxed.

Affirmation (You may silently or out loud say to yourself with conviction)

"I do my best to relax physically and mentally in spite of such annoying problems as the outside noise, cough, shortness of breath or pain. Thoughts, feelings and sensations may interrupt me but I can quickly bring my mind to the part of the body I want to relax. Staying relaxed and calm, I simply bring my attention to each part of the body.

"Feet relax...Relaxing soles of the feet, toes and ankle joints... Legs from ankle joints to knee joints...From knee joints to thigh joints.

Relaxing pelvis...abdomen...mid-section...and chest.

Relaxing, hips...the lower back...mid-back...and now the upper back.

The whole upper body relaxes...front...back...from inside...from outside...the entire upper body relaxes." Aaah! (Sigh while exhaling)

"Relaxing shoulders, shoulder pads and the shoulder blades...now the space between the shoulder blades.

Relaxing the upper arms from shoulder joints to elbow joints...

Upper arms and elbows lower down towards the hips...

Forearms to wrists...

Hands relax all the way down to the fingertips.

The top of my hands and palms relax.

Nice, lazy, relaxing feeling of warmth and heaviness...from finger tips all the way up through the arms and shoulders...

The back of the neck and head relaxes.

All the tiny and large muscles in my neck and throat relax.

Feeling of relaxation spreads over to the nape of the neck...back of the head...over the entire scalp...Down to my forehead.

Forehead feels smooth and shiny like the touch of lavender or a cool breeze.

"The feeling of relaxation flows down my face.

Nostrils relax and feel more open than before.

Any blockages in the upper part of nose relax and shrink.

Sinuses relax and open up.

My jaw relaxes.

Gums, teeth, tongue, hard and soft palate, and the throat relax from inside.

"I observe my breathing without trying to change it in any way."

While inhaling, silently saying, "in."

While exhaling, silently saying, "out."

"In"...and "Out"
"In"...and "Out"
"In"...and "Out"
"In"...and "Out"
"In"...and "Out."

"I can imagine as if the breath enters through the crown of my head...and exits through the feet. Breathing in as if through the crown of the head and breathing out through the toes and the soles of the feet.

Inhaling "Inn..." exhaling "Ouutt..."
Inhaling "Inn..." exhaling "Ouutt..."
Inhaling "Inn..." exhaling "Ouutt..."
Inhaling "Inn..." exhaling "Ouutt..."
Inhaling "Inn..." exhaling "Ouutt..."

"Neck and shoulders become more relaxed and loose.
Shoulders back and down...shoulder blades slightly lowered towards the mid-back.

"Diaphragm is soft, relaxed and increased in length.
It contracts and relaxes and breathes me.

When I exhale, my diaphragm goes up higher than ever before and pushes up against the bottom of my lungs.
It expels the air more completely.

I can picture my diaphragm attached to my lower ribs as a sheath, separating my abdomen from my lower chest.

I can feel the diaphragm moving in all the three dimensions, up and down, sideways and back to front.

As my diaphragm moves the lower ribs also move. Muscles between the ribs are becoming strong and flexible, helping my ribcage to move.

"I exhale softly and slowly. Diaphragm on both sides goes up like two domes pushing at the bottom of the lungs. The center of the diaphragm goes up and massages my heart at the same time. As the diaphragm moves up, lower ribs slightly lower down towards the hips. I exhale and feel the diaphragm moving up towards the lungs.

"Observing effortlessly and calmly. As I breathe *in* softly and gently, my diaphragm goes down...side ribs spread out and up like the little wings on both sides. My ribcage lifts, lumbar curve arches...at the same time, abdomen between the navel and the breastbone tip lengthens.

Whole Body Breathing

"Whole body breathing! Ten relaxing breaths!

Ten...Inhaling as if through the head going down all the way into the toes. Exhaling, starting with toes, going up and out as if through the crown of the head.

Nine... Inhaling from crown to the toes and exhaling from toes to the crown.

Eight..Inhaling crown to toes...Exhaling toes to the crown.

Seven..In through the crown...Out through the crown.

Six...In through the crown...Out through the crown.

Five...In...Out...

Four...In...Out...

Three...In...Out...

Two...In...Out...

One...In...Out...

Whole body breathing from head to toes!

Visualization

Picture for a few minutes in your "mind's eye" any of the following:

- Think about the place you would like to be right now
- Or, the time of your life you loved and enjoyed most
- Spend as much time as you have at your disposal. Savor that time and place in your mind, and occasionally return to whole body breathing.

Relaxed Breathing

- Relax your body, relax your breathing, and relax your mind!
- Take a few minutes now and just do relaxed breathing. Relaxed breathing is smooth, rhythmic and consistent flow of breath. Inhale and exhale slowly and gently.
- Regular practice of relaxed breathing over time can help towards regulating your breath.