

HeadFIT

Body Relaxation Techniques

To operate at your very best, it helps to be calm and relaxed. Negative emotions and tension are the enemy of good performance, so practicing relaxation techniques is a simple way to be where you want to be.

So, over the next few minutes, I'll take you through an exercise called Progressive Relaxation. Firstly, make sure that you're in a comfortable position, either sitting in a chair or lying down, preferably somewhere which means you won't be interrupted. Now, close your eyes and allow your attention to start focusing on your breath for just a few moments. Breathing at your normal pace. Noticing the in-breath and the out-breath. Recognise how your breath is impacting your body. Making your chest and your stomach rise and fall.

Take a little time here and just notice your breathing for the next minute. If your mind starts to wander, just notice this. Acknowledge it, and bring your attention back to your body. Continue to do this throughout the exercise, as your mind will no doubt wander. Just gently bring it back to the muscle you're working on when you realise this has happened.

Now, take a deep breath through your chest to your stomach. Hold for a few seconds and exhale slowly. During your outbreath, focus on exhaling any tension you may have and allow it to leave your body. Again, inhale a nice deep breath and exhale, releasing any tension that's left. Now, return to your normal breath to begin the muscle relaxation. Remember, try not to hold your breath during the exercise. Breathe normally and freely.

So let's begin. We'll work from the top of your body downwards, so start to scrunch the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows up. Keeping tension for about five seconds. Now release your eyebrows, allowing the tension to fall away. Focus on the relaxed sensation in your forehead for a few seconds. Now open your mouth widely and turn it into a smile. Focusing on the tension in your cheeks and mouth. Hold this smile for five seconds. Release and relax every muscle in your face and acknowledge the weightless feeling that follows.

Next, scrunch your nose up tight and then squint with both your eyes, shutting them tightly. Make sure they're fully closed. Hold this for about five seconds and release. Now, lift your shoulders up to the ceiling as far as they'll go into your neck and up to your ears. Hold this for five seconds. And release. Focusing on the heaviness of your shoulders dropping. Focus on the relaxed sensation of your whole head, neck and shoulders. Allow the stress and any leftover tension to be released through your breath as you focus on the relaxed muscles of your face, neck, and shoulders.

Refocus your attention onto your breath for 1 or 2 breaths, in and out, releasing any last tension. Now focus your awareness on your right forearm and create tension by squeezing the muscles. Let the tension increase for five seconds until you release. Breathe in and out. Now make a tight fist with your right hand. Squeeze it tightly, as tightly as you can. Feeling the pressure in your fingers. Hold for five seconds and release. Allowing your hand to open right out into a natural position. Don't force it. Just allow it to rest.

Now build the tension in the whole of your right arm and hand. Tensing the whole arm for five seconds. And release. Now focus your mind on your left forearm. Create tension by squeezing the muscles. Let the tension increase for five seconds until you release. Breathe in and out. Now make a tight fist with your left hand. Squeeze it tightly, as tightly as you can. Feeling the pressure in your fingers, hold it for five seconds and release. Allowing your hand to open right out to a natural position. Again, don't force it. Just allow it to rest.

Now build the tension in the whole of your left arm and hand. Tense the whole arm for five seconds...and release. Go back to your breath, focusing on your in-breath and your out-breath. Notice again the weight leaving your arms, allowing any stress to leave you. Focus now on your back. Create tension by squeezing your shoulder blades together as far as they will go. Focus on the strength you're using to hold them in place for five seconds, the muscles working hard. And release. Pause for about five to ten seconds and just breathe. Now turn your attention to your chest. Take a deep breath in, and release a deep breath out.

Visualising the tension being released through your out-breath. Connect with the sense of all the muscles in your upper body feeling released and tension free. Breathe gently, in and out. Breathe. Focusing on your lower body.

Tighten your buttocks as firmly as you can. Feel the tension in your hips and hold for five seconds. Then, release. And breathe for five seconds. Create tension in your entire right leg and thigh. Hold for five seconds...and relax. Feel the larger muscles release and the tension leave your body as your right leg is left weightless. Focus on your in-breath and your out-breath.

Now tense your right foot by scrunching your toes towards the ground and then pulling them up towards you. Sensing the tension now also in your calves. Hold for five seconds...and release, allowing the weight in the whole of your right leg to leave you. And breathe for five seconds. Create tension in your entire left leg and thigh. Hold for five seconds. And relax. Feel the larger muscles release again and the tension leave your body as your left leg becomes weightless. Focus on your in-breath and your out-breath.

Now tense your left foot by scrunching your toes towards the ground and then pulling them up towards you. Sensing the tension now also in your calves. Hold for five seconds...and release, allowing the weight in the whole of your left leg to leave you. Now allow your mind to focus on the whole of your body, imagining a soft sense of relaxation spreading across you all the way from your head, through your shoulders, down your arms and your hands, across your chest, down to your legs and feet. Let that sensation flow throughout your body like a wave so that it's comforting, relaxing, and tension free. Focus on how weightless your body feels, with each muscle being in a state of complete relaxation.

Focus on your breath, your in-breath, your out-breath. Breathe in, sinking into the weightless feeling of your body. Breathe out to the feeling of total relaxation. Focus on your stomach and chest, rising and falling with each gentle breath. And stay focusing on your breath for a minute or two. Inhaling and exhaling. With your body feeling fully relaxed, open your eyes when you're ready. Thanks for listening.