

# RELAXATION – controlled breathing

Relaxation strategies can be extremely helpful and useful. Relaxation can help you to better manage stress, tension and anxiety. Relaxation can help you perform better at work and remain calmer in any situation. It can be used at work or at home, on the bus or while you are standing in a queue. Relaxation is a skill that will become more effective and easier with **practice**.

This method of relaxation is usually referred to as “**controlled breathing**”. It is most effective in reducing anxiety and helping you to keep calm. It is quick and easy to use anywhere and anytime. Simply follow the instructions below.

*Make yourself comfortable and then breathe slowly and evenly.*

*Quietly say to yourself “in” when you breathe in, and “relax” when you breathe out.*

*Repeat this over and over again. Focus as much as you can on these 2 simple words.*

*Imagine that with every breath out, each time you say “relax”, you are becoming more and more calm and relaxed.*

*If you get distracted or if your thoughts wander, gently ease your mind back to “in” and “relax”. Refocus as often as you need to.*

**Don't forget, practice is the key. If you can practice between 5-7 times each day, even if only for a few minutes, you'll gradually master the skill and begin to realise the benefits.**

# RELAXATION – PMR

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This method of relaxation is usually referred to as “**progressive muscular relaxation**”. It is most effective in reducing stress and tension. It is usually easiest to do sitting or lying down. Simply follow the instructions below.

*Begin by making yourself comfortable and by breathing nice and slowly.*

*Gently tense the muscles in your face and head as you breathe in, then relax the muscles as you breathe out. Repeat this 2 or 3 times.*

*Do the same for the muscles in your neck and shoulders.*

*Continue this process in a slow and deliberate way through your whole body. Relax your muscles more and more as you progress.*

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# RELAXATION – VISUAL IMAGERY

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This method of relaxation is usually referred to as “**visual imagery relaxation**”. It is most effective in creating feelings of calmness and tranquillity, and the form of relaxation that most closely resembles meditation. It can be practiced anywhere, but is typically easiest to do in a quiet, peaceful location. Start by following the instructions below, but feel free to experiment & come up with your own ideas.

*Begin by making yourself comfortable and by breathing slowly. Take a few deep breaths, exhaling slowly and thinking calming, relaxing thoughts.*

*Picture yourself in a beautiful location, where everything is as you would ideally have it. You may be on the beach, in a rainforest, by a lake or just at home in a nice, comfortable chair. Imagine yourself as calm and relaxed. You can feel yourself as calm and relaxed. All you can hear is calming and relaxing. The sky is blue, the water fresh, the chair soft and warm. Use your imagination to create a tranquil and peaceful place for you to relax. Involve all of your senses and assure yourself that you can return to this place whenever you want or need to relax.*

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