



Quick Relaxation Strategies

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Place one hand on your belly, just below the naval (belly button). On the inhalation, your hand should move away from your body. On the exhalation it should move toward the body. Focus your attention on the movement of your hand. You can do this standing, sitting or lying down.

RELAXATION RESPONSE

Pick a word or phrase that has either positive or neutral connotations for you. (For example: "I am relaxed," "Easy," "Sparkle.") Sit quietly in a comfortable position and begin breathing slowly and naturally. On the exhale, say to yourself your focus word or phrase. If your mind starts to wander, that's okay. Just come back to your breathing and to repeating your focus word or phrase.

SLOW BREATH

Slowly take a deep breath. Hold it for a count of 4. Then, gently let it out, letting tensions go as you exhale. *Our breathing becomes shallow as we become tense. A deep breath can help more oxygen enter our system, literally breathing more life into ourselves.*

RELEASING TENSION

Emphasize the differences between holding tension in your body and letting it go. Try to bend your toes up as if to touch your shins. Hold them there while you tighten your thighs, buttocks, and fists. Take a deep breath and hold it while you clench your jaw and close your eyes. Hold all that tension for five seconds. Then, let it go all at once-don't ease off-feel the tension draining from your body as you exhale.

COOL AIR IN, WARM AIR OUT

With your eyes closed, shift your attention to the tip of your nose. As you breathe in, become aware of the air coming into your nostrils. As you breathe out, be aware of the sensation of the air passing back out. Perhaps you notice that the air coming in tends to be cooler and the air breathed out tends to be warmer. Just be aware of cool air in...and warm air out. Focusing on a physiological activity (air in and out) can help calm your mind and relax your body.

Staff Article

DEEP BREATH

Become aware of your feet and legs. As you take in a slow, deep breath, imagine pulling all the tensions in them to your lungs and expelling these tensions as you gently exhale. Then, with a second deep breath, expel all the tensions in your trunk, hands, and arms and expel them with a gentle exhalation. Then, finish off by collecting all those in your shoulders, neck and head. With practice, you might be able to collect tensions in your entire body in one deep inhalation and expel them. If you have special tensions in one particular spot, devote one full breath to that spot.

THE FOUR S's

First, smile and make your eyes sparkle. Yes, you can do it. Smile and make your eyes sparkle. Then, take a deep breath. As you let it out, just let your jaw hang slack, shoulders sag, and forehead smooth out. Go ahead. Do it again. Smile with sparkling eyes, take a deep breath, let it out and feel your jaw go slack, shoulders sag, and forehead smooth out. Four S's = smile, slack, sag, smooth.

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

Most of us worry about events that never actually happen or things that have already happened. Reality consists of one time and one time only, the present. Repeat to yourself as often as needed each day: Where am I? Here. What time is it? Now.

EQUALIZING BREATH

Breathe in to the count of four and out to a count of four (thousand one, thousand two, thousand three, thousand four). Do that four or five times. *With tenseness, our breathing can become irregular. Slowing down and equalizing our inhalations and exhalations is calming.*

HEAVY FEET

Just imagine that your feet and legs are getting heavier and heavier with each breath out. It's almost as if you are wearing lead boots. My feet are heavy. My feet are heavy. Just imagine this for a few seconds. Or, perhaps imagine heaviness in some other part of your body (e.g. arms, shoulders, or jaw) that works for you.

WARM HANDS

Visualize your hands as warm and relaxed. You might imagine them in a bucket of warm water, near a fire, or in a warm pair of fleece gloves. Perhaps you can even begin to feel the warm blood flowing down into your hands down to your fingertips. Your hands are warm and relaxed.

EQUALIZING BREATHING

Take four seconds to breathe in and four seconds to breathe out. That is, as you inhale, count: one...two...three...four. Do the same as you breathe out. Do this four or five times. Avoid holding your breath after the inhalation or the exhalation, just smoothly transition from one phase to the other.

YOUR RELAXATION PLACE

Begin with a few relaxation breaths. Then with your eyes closed, take a moment to create in your mind's eye an ideal spot to relax. You can make it any place you'd like, such as the mountains, beach, lake, prairie, or park. It can be either a real or an imagined place. See yourself comfortably enjoying this place. Now, once you have created it, go use it for 15 seconds or so whenever you feel the need to relax.

SHOULDER SHRUGS

Raise your shoulders as if trying to touch your ears with them. Breathe in while doing this. Feel the muscles in your neck and shoulders tense. Then, all at once, let your shoulders drop while breathing out. Feel the tension leaving the muscles of your neck and shoulders. Repeat the shrug a few times, inhaling on the shrug and exhaling on the release. Keep your jaw relaxed as you do these.

Counseling Services, Kansas State University 232
English/Counseling Services Bldg Manhattan, KS
66506 (785) 532-6927 counsel@ksu.edu



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