

Relaxation Techniques

Relax, it's important!

Your body can respond to worrying situations and anxious thoughts with muscle tension. Long-term and constant muscle tension can have all sorts of unpleasant consequences, from crankiness and headaches through to sleeping and heart problems. So, learning relaxation techniques can be a real asset in managing stress and anxiety. They don't take long!

Different relaxation techniques work better for different people. Don't be afraid to try all of them to see which ones appeal to you most.

Deep Breathing

Sit with your legs uncrossed, good posture, and place your hands on your thighs. Close your eyes. Inhale deeply through your nose into your abdomen for a long count of five seconds (your chest should move only a little). Hold for a long count of two seconds, then breathe out slowly through your mouth for a long count of five. Repeat for 10 to 15 cycles. Stop briefly if you feel light-headed.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Loosen any tight clothing, sit or lie comfortably, and close your eyes. Tense different muscles of your body as much as you can for at least a count of 10 (never so tight or long that it hurts!). Then, slowly release the tension and allow the muscle to relax. Let that feeling of relaxation flow through your body. Start at your feet and move up.

Creative Visualisation

This is a technique where you imagine a scene, place or situation you regard as safe, restful, and happy. Sit comfortably in a quiet place. Breathe gently through your nose, eyes closed. Picture in your mind the place you like – a forest, the beach, a field. Try and smell the aromas, taste the air, hear the sounds. Feel your body relax. Continue for at least 10 minutes.

Meditation

Sit comfortably in a quiet spot. Close your eyes if you like. Breathe in through your nose. As you exhale, say the word 'One' silently to yourself. You might like to focus on the sound you make exhaling (like the Sanskrit word 'Om'). Or, if your eyes are open, focus on an object, exploring its colours and textures. Spend at least 10 minutes meditating, but stay focused.

Mandala Circles

This is a drawing technique to calm the mind. Bring a pencil/s and paper to a quiet place. Draw a large circle. Now, be prepared to keep drawing for at least 10 minutes. Start filling the circle with whatever you like – spirals, patterns, running-writing – but don't let the pencil leave the paper unless you're changing colours.

Yoga

Yoga comes from a Sanskrit word meaning 'to unite'; it is a series of mental and physical exercises. While yoga has strong connections with religions like Buddhism and Sufism, its exercises are a great way to improve health, and can be done by anyone of any age and fitness. We recommend you start at classes conducted by a registered instructor.

Exercise can help 'bust' stress and keep you feeling well

Regular exercise (20–30 minutes a day) is extremely important for staying healthy and releasing tension. Most exercises are very cheap or free. Group sports are fun, but individual activities like walking, running, swimming and cycling are also very good for clearing the mind and releasing physical tension. The important thing is not to overdo it and injure yourself.

Schedule Pleasant Activities

It is admirable to study and work hard. However, each of us needs to have some time away from study and work. Unfortunately, the fun stuff is often what gets neglected when things become hectic. That means it's important to schedule in things you enjoy doing, like seeing friends, going to the movies, or heading to the beach. Fun isn't just enjoyable, it's part of keeping well!

Helpful Self-talk

Your inner voice can help you relax and cope with difficult situations. Encouraging yourself can be just as important – and often even more important – as having others encourage you. Practise saying helpful things to yourself like, 'It might be tough but I can have a go', and 'If I take this calmly I can do it one step at a time'. Always challenge unhelpful self-talk.

Seek Help When You Need It

There are times when all of us find it difficult to cope with anxiety and stress by ourselves. Some people you can turn to for help are: your GP, counsellors, and other trusted adults. You should also consider these options:

WEBSITES

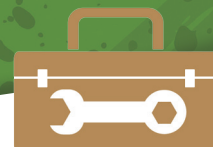
www.youthbeyondblue.com
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www.sane.org
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HELPLINES

Youthbeyondblue: 1300 22 4636
Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
Lifeline: 13 11 14
Sane Australia: 1800 18 7263

ONLINE COUNSELLING

www.kidshelp.com.au



beyondblue
the national depression initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au



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