

DE-STRESS

RELAXATION, BREATHING, AND LAUGHTER

How do you Relax?

The business of life can leave you feeling that there's no time to relax, but taking even just a few minutes to rest and unwind is important to our health. To relax means to calm the mind, the body, or both. There are different ways to relax. Here are a few options to consider.

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple and powerful relaxation technique. It is the cornerstone of many meditation practices and can be combined with other relaxing elements such as aromatherapy and music.

The benefits of deep breathing:

- ✓ It's easy to learn
- ✓ Can be done anywhere and anytime
- ✓ Increases oxygen flow in your blood
- ✓ Decreases tension, shortness of breath and anxiety
- ✓ Re-energizes and promotes relaxation



The Practice of Deep Breathing

The key to deep breathing is to breathe deeply from the **abdomen** to get as much fresh air as possible into your lungs.

Feeling tense? Do this exercise for 3 to 5 minutes! Try this before meetings, before or after an important phone call, at a stoplight, or after an argument!

- 1 Sit comfortably with your back straight. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
- 2 Slowly inhale through your nose, expanding your abdomen and allowing air to fill your lungs.
- 3 Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can and contract your abdomen.
- 4 Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Tip: Inhale *deeply* so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.

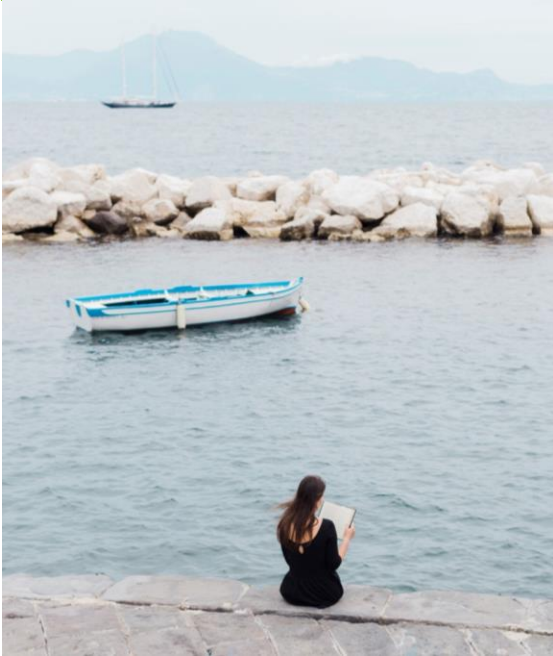


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Visualization

When used as a relaxation technique, visualization involves imagining a scene in which you feel at peace and free to let go of tension and anxiety. Visualization requires you to employ your sense of sight, taste, touch, smell, and sound.



The Practice of Visualization

- 1 Find a quiet, relaxing environment, and assume a comfortable position.
- 2 Choose a setting that is calming to you. For example, a beach, the park, a favourite childhood spot. Choose a setting that appeals to YOU. Do not choose places that others suggest.
- 3 Close your eyes and let your worries drift away.
- 4 Imagine your calming place. Picture the setting as vividly as possible using at least 3 senses. For example, if your calming place is a dock on a quiet lake, you may imagine that you:
 - Hear the birds singing
 - Smell the pine trees
 - Feel the cool water on your feet
 - Taste the fresh, clean air
- 5 Enjoy the feeling of deep relaxation as you explore your restful place.
- 6 When you are ready, open your eyes and return to the present.

Laughter

Stress relief from laughter? It's no joke! When it comes to de-stressing, more giggles are just what the doctor ordered. A good sense of humour can't cure all ailments, but research demonstrates that there are many benefits to laughter.

Physical Health Benefits

- Boosts immunity
- Lowers stress hormones
- Relaxes muscles

Mental Health Benefits

- Eases anxiety and fear
- Adds joy and zest to life
- Improves mood

Social Benefits

- Strengthens relationships
- Attracts others to us
- Enhances teamwork

Develop a Humour First-Aid Kit

Find a few simple items that make you chuckle. They could be photos, comic strips, jokes, videos, or mementos of a funny memory. Keep them handy so you can enjoy them when you need a little humour boost.



Sources: helpguide.org, mayoclinic.com