

Week 2: Breathing, Relaxation, and Laughter



Deep Breathing

“Sometimes I get so busy that I forget to take a breath!”

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 (e.g., aromatherapy, music).

Benefits of Deep Breathing

- ▶ 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** – get as much fresh air as possible into your lungs. As you inhale more oxygen you **decrease tension, shortness of breath, and anxiety**.

Do this exercise for 3 – 5 minutes whenever you feel tense



1. Sit *comfortably* with your back straight. Place one hand on your chest and one on 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.

Try this before meetings, before or after a phone call, at a stop light, or after an argument!

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 **all** your senses: **sight, taste, touch, smell, and sound**.



The Practice of Visualization

1. Find a quiet and relaxed environment. Assume a comfortable sitting or standing position.
2. Choose a setting that is calming to you (e.g., beach, park, favorite childhood spot)
3. Close your eyes and let your worries drift away.
4. Imagine your calming place. Picture the setting as vividly as possible – use at least 3 senses.

Example: A dock on a quiet lake

- 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 ready, open your eyes and return to the present

Tip: Choose a setting that appeals to **YOU**. Do not select images that someone else suggested.

Stress Relief from Laughter? Yes, no joke!

When it comes to **relieving stress**, *more giggles* are just what the doctor ordered. A good sense of humour can't cure all ailments, but data are mounting about the positive things laughter can do.

Benefits of Laughter

Physical Health Benefits	Mental Health Benefits	Social Benefits
Boosts immunity	Eases anxiety and fear	Strengthens relationships
Lowers stress hormones	Adds joy and zest to life	Attracts others to us
Relaxes your muscles	Improves mood	Enhances teamwork

Develop a “Humour First-Aid Kit”

Create a “kit” and keep on hand for *stress emergencies*:

1. Find a few simple items (**e.g., photos, comic strips, jokes, videos**) that make you chuckle.
2. Keep them on hand when you need a humour boost.



Resource: www.helpguide.org; www.mayoclinic.com