

THE 10 DAY MEDITATION CHALLENGE

DAY 6 – THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

Traffic jams, lineups, deadlines, constant connection, the demise of the economy, and threats of war are a reality for many in today's world. We live in a stressful time, which encourages stress hormones to flood our bodies and activate the fight-or-flight response several times in an average day. In fact, for some of us, it never turns off! Luckily, we have a built-in relaxation response system that can help to counteract the toxic effects of chronic stress by slowing breathing rate, relaxing muscles, and reducing blood pressure.

“The Relaxation Response” is meant to counter the stress response. A study done by the Institute for Technology Assessment and the Benson-Henry Institute (BHI) for Mind Body Medicine, found that individuals in the relaxation-response program used fewer health care services in the year after their participation than in the preceding year.

It is a physical state of deep rest that changes the physical and emotional response to stress based on two basic steps: repeating a word, short phrase or prayer and disregarding everyday thoughts to maintain focus. When eliciting the relaxation response, metabolism, heart rate, and blood pressure decrease, muscles relax, and breathing slows.



PUT IT INTO ACTION

Step 1: Pick a focus word, short phrase, or prayer that is rooted in your belief system.

Step 2: Sit quietly in a comfortable position.

Step 3: Close your eyes.

Step 4: Relax your muscles from head to toe.

Step 5: Breathe slowly and naturally. As you exhale, repeat your focus word or phrase.

Step 6: Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you are doing, and return to your repetition.

Step 7: Continue for 10-20 minutes.

Step 8: Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly, allowing other thoughts to return.

Action Step: The Mind Body Medical Institute states: **“The ideal is to develop a routine, a time to bring forth the relaxation response that becomes as much a part of the day as brushing your teeth.” Practice this technique before breakfast and 2 hours after dinner until it becomes a routine part of your day.**

Sources: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/10/relaxation-response-proves-positive/>
<https://www.massgeneral.org/wellness/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=7064>