

# Ease your tension with relaxation techniques



You can experience stress any time and any place. Fortunately, there are simple relaxation techniques to help ease the tension wherever you are. These techniques can also improve your sleep, boost concentration and give you more energy.

## Deep breathing

When stressed, your breaths become rapid and shallow, your heart rate increases and your muscles become tense. Deep breathing signals the brain to relax itself and is a key element of many other relaxation exercises. This technique is an easy one to learn.

### Deep breathing exercise

- Find a comfortable position in a chair or lie on your back. Then slowly relax your body.
- Inhale slowly through your nose. Fill the lower part of your chest first, then the middle and top part of your chest and lungs. Do this slowly over eight to 10 seconds.
- Hold your breath for two seconds. Then quietly and easily relax and exhale. Wait a few seconds and repeat this cycle three times.

## Visualization

Use your imagination and senses to create a mental journey to a calm and peaceful place or situation.

### Visualization exercise

- Sit in a comfortable chair or lie on your back with your eyes closed.
- Imagine yourself in a peaceful place, like the beach, mountains or your favorite comfy chair.
- Imagine you are there. See and feel your surroundings, hear the peaceful sounds, smell the air, feel the climate or any sensation you find. Relax and enjoy it.



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# More techniques to try



## Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)

This two-step process teaches you to relax your muscles by tensing specific muscle groups. Whenever you create tension in a muscle then release the tension, the muscle has to relax. By practicing PMR regularly, your entire body will become more relaxed as it releases tension.

### Progressive muscle relaxation exercise

- Find a quiet space and a comfortable position in a chair that supports your head and neck, or lie on your back. Close your eyes and take several deep breaths.
- Tighten the muscles in your hands by clenching a tight fist, hold for four counts and then release. Feel the difference between tight and relaxed muscles.
- Repeat this process for other muscles starting with your facial muscles (Examples: Clench your jaw, tightly close your eyes, wrinkle your forehead and raise your eyebrow). Then move on to other muscle groups (Examples: Tense your neck muscles, shrug your shoulders, tighten your arms and legs, and curl your toes under tightly).

Remember, if you experience any discomfort while practicing these techniques, stop and consult your physician before continuing.

Some relaxation techniques will work better for some than others. Try these exercises and decide which ones suit you best.

