



Rest and Relaxation Resources

Resources for rest and relaxation

Sitting Relaxation with Desensitisation Techniques:

The following practices are based on Yoga relaxation and pre-meditation practices. They have been widely used in Mindfulness and Stress Management programmes all over the world.

It is recommended that you first practice them at home. When you are more familiar with the practices, you can transfer them into every-day situations, such as when sitting in a waiting room, on a bus or train, or just after parking the car before your next activity.

They should take between 5 – 10 minutes.

Posture:

- Sitting in a chair, head supported if possible, eyes closed or gaze lowered.

Developing awareness of the sensation of *touch*:

- Soles of feet on floor – sense contact between feet and floor / weight / firmness
- Thighs against seat – sense contact / pressure / weight
- Back against chair – sense contact / pressure / weight
- Hands resting on lap – sense contact against legs / weight
- Sense texture of clothing / seat
- Face – skin in contact with air – sense temperature / movement or stillness through skin
- Eyelids – sense weight of eyelids over eyes / resting

Developing awareness of the sensation of *sound*:

- Detect sounds – close by / far away
- All sounds / noises in room / outside
- No need to analyse
- Listen
- Witness
- Listen to one sound, then another
- Listen to all sounds together
- Then bring awareness into the body – listen to the sound of your own gentle breathing

Breathing Practices for Everyday Life:

Effective breathing makes more efficient use of the lower part of the lungs (often called ‘the abdominal or diaphragmatic breath’).

If you watch a baby or a pet dog / cat sleep, you can watch its tummy move up and down as it breathes. We were all excellent abdominal breathers as babies, but often unlearn the ‘right breathing’ as we go through life. We might have formed a habit of holding tension in our tummies and then pushing the breath into the upper chest.

It is useful to re-learn abdominal breathing for the following reasons;

- ✓ It increases the oxygen supply to the body, has a calming effect on the nervous system, and is needed to help us fall asleep.
- ✓ It can see us through challenging situations, by keeping a stress and / or anxiety response at bay.
- ✓ If you experience a stressful time you can also use this breathing technique to calm the system down again.
- ✓ Last but not least, it helps us to be more assertive when we need it!

Posture:

- To start with, it is advisable to develop your breathing practice lying on your back, with a flat pillow under your head.
- If you experience lower back problems, bend your knees and support them from underneath with cushions or a blanket rolled up.
- Let the arms rest by the sides and a little away from the body. Initially, you might wish to rest one palm across your tummy.
- Later on, you can practice in many situations of daily life, like when standing in a queue, when stuck in traffic, or – once you are a pro - during an argument!



Breath Awareness:

Before you work on the abdominal breath, it is important that you spend 5 – 10 minutes watching the natural spontaneous breath first. This alone will calm the breath and, subsequently, the nervous system down. You will discover this yourself, as your breath will become longer and less frequent, and you begin to feel more relaxed.

Long Out Breath:

- When we want to increase the efficiency of our breathing and the amount of oxygen available to us, we need to increase our out breath. This is because there can be a lot of unused oxygen in the lungs, and we want to increase efficient usage.
- First watch the natural breath for about 10 breaths.
- Then begin to deepen and lengthen the out breath.
- Let the breath in follow naturally with minimal effort.
- Imagine and visualise a long line from the crown of the head all the way down to the feet.
- Start breathing out the line of the body. Imagining a downward, sweeping movement as you breathe out.
- Develop a sense of awareness, a sense of letting go as you breathe out.

Abdominal Breath

- First watch the natural breath for about 10 breaths.
- Then take your awareness to the navel and the area around it (the abdomen).
- You might discover a slight rising and falling as you breathe in and out.
- Focus your attention on each in breath and each out breath. If your mind wanders gently bring your attention back to your breath.

You may notice a gradual deepening of the breath, taking your time, no forcing;



“I am breathing in....I am breathing out”

Soothe the Senses:

Symptoms can be affected by sensory experiences. For example, exposure to bright lights or loud noises can alert the nervous system and in turn increase or perpetuate symptoms.



However, some sensory experiences can help to reduce or calm the nervous system.

Below is a list of sensory activities which you may find helpful as aids to effective rest and relaxation. Use the blank chart to record the ones you currently use or ones you may wish to try.

Sight

- Watching the clouds / trees
- Watching the water flow
- Watching a fire
- Watching a fish tank
- Watching a lava lamp

Sound

- Listening to music
- Listening to sounds close by (clock / people)
- Listening to sounds far away (birds / traffic / church bells)
- Listening to the sounds of the sea
- Listening to nature
- Listening to the weather

Touch

- Soft blanket
- Pets
- Massage (head or body)
- Acupressure / acupuncture
- Hot water bottle / blanket
- A cuddle
- Water – bath / shower
- Rolling your head / neck slowly
- Position of your body against bed / chair / floor / clothing

Taste

- Having a drink (hot / cold / fizzy)
- Eating (hot / cold / soothing)

Smell

- Food
- Drink
- Perfume
- Aromatherapy oils / candles
- Laundry
- Flowers / cut grass
- Fresh / country / sea air

Sense Awareness

Sight 	
Sound 	
Touch 	
Taste 	
Smell 	