

HOW TO RELAX.....REALLY

The problem in our lives isn't stress – but it is not relieving stress. The exercises are designed to help in de-stressing your life, expanding your senses and opening up your capabilities. Try several – find some which allow you to instantly reach a relaxed state. Then – use them regularly.

DEPRESSURIZER

Stand in doorway and press your palms against the doorframe on both sides. Hold your breath and keep increasing the pressure – you will feel warmth rushing to your face, head, and neck. Hold as long as you can. Release. Inhale deeply. Repeat three times.

RAG DOLL SHAKE

Shake out one hand, then the other; then with our mouth hanging loose, shake your head like a rag doll. Shake each leg. Then hop, shaking the other foot. Then jump and wriggle your pelvis and throw your arms around every which way. Make some noises while you're at it! Keep this up for three to five minutes.

SHOULDER RELAXER

Every half hour or so, if you're having a hectic day, drop your jaw suddenly. As you drop it, breathe, shrug your shoulders and rotate them fully – back, front, up, down, in generous smooth circles as high, wide and handsome as you can make them. Bring them around to normal position; make sure the back muscles of your shoulders have really relaxed.

MAGIC MASSAGE

Imagine that your hands are a magic healing and tension-relieving tool. Breathe slowly and deeply as you massage yourself. As you inhale, feel that your breath is flowing directly to and relaxing the tense places, and that you diffuse and exhale, through the entire body all fatigue, soreness, discomfort and tension. Massage a friend and vice versa.

FACIAL EXERCISES

Make all kinds of extreme “faces” – with all area muscles of your face and neck (good “waker-upper” when driving). Do 10 of each thing.

PLUMB-LINE CENTERING

Imagine a plumb line running from the sky through the crown of your head, down through the center of your body, to the ground between your legs. Half-close your eyes. Gently transfer all your weight to the right foot, lifting the left foot a little. Keep breathing slowly and easily, and hold your balance for six breaths. Feel the floor supporting you. Return to center and gently transfer your weight to left leg; balance lightly for six slow breaths. Imagine the weight is still centered between your legs. This helps you feel balanced and grounded, able to face crisis with equanimity.

MID-BACK DETENSER

Lean back holding onto a desk or table. Have fingers facing forward, head down, knees slightly bent, body slumped. Inhale. Arch your body back, like a bow and drop your head back. Stretch. Straighten legs. Press toes against the floor. Hold for a count of four and feel that stretch in your back muscles. To get the stretch higher or lower in your back, simply move your hands farther apart or closer together. S-T-R-E-T-C-H! Now exhale, bend knees, and come back to starting position. Repeat sequence 12 times.

BACK RELAXANT

Lay on back on floor. Roll up in a ball and rock back and forth on spine.

RUSHING ERASER

Walk quickly but breathe as slowly as possible. Start by counting four steps as you inhale. Then exhale evenly on eight steps. Work up to ten steps as you inhale, twenty steps as you exhale. The faster you go, the slower you breathe. Continue indefinitely. You must practice this exercise, so you will be able to use it easily when you want to.

BRAIN CLEANER

Close your eyes. Imagine a broom sweeping out sense after sense, sweeping out all of your perceptions: sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling. This cleans out your senses, making them fresh. Take three to five minutes for each sense. Breathe deeply. Open your eyes.

FLOWER POWER

Imagine your favorite flower. Now BE that flower. Focus on it, meditate on it, and use it for your image of yourself. When under stress remember the image of your favorite flower and how it feels to be that flower. This will have an instant de-stressing and calming effect.

LAUGH-AWAY ANGER

Laugh for three minutes. Start by just saying "ha, ha, ha" until you're genuinely laughing. Laughing continuously takes a lot of energy; it also produces a lot of energy by relaxing many involuntary muscles and stepping up oxygen consumption and circulation.

PLEASURE TREASURY

At the end of each day check whether you have had at least one pleasant experience from each of your senses: Did you see something beautiful? Did you taste something good? Did you smell something fragrant? Did you hear something lovely? Did you touch something pleasurable? Did you feel any warm, loving thoughts and spread them through-out your body? Keep a record for a week. Make an effort to use all of your senses.

FLOATING IN SPACE

Close your eyes. Feel a great space between your eyes...between your ears...be aware of the space between your shoulders...between your ribs...between your sides...between your hips...visualize yourself floating in the spaces and just be there...be aware of any emotions, thoughts or pain and dissolve them in the space. There is an endless horizon, all is swirling lightness...feel that you are all space...allow yourself to let go of your body completely...you are diffused through the universe.

SONIC SHOWER

Get in a warm shower. Begin to hum (with slightly parted jaws and loose lips). Feel the hum massaging the sides, back and top of your head with soft, stimulating sonic "fingers."

PRAYER POSE

Sit on your knees, bend over with chest on your knees, put your forehead on the ground, extend your arms and hands forward on the ground past your head, palms together. Relax your stomach. Breathe slowly and deeply until you feel relaxed, and then a little longer.

INSTANT VACATION

Close your eyes, breathe deeply, relax every part of your body. Go to your favorite natural place: a beautiful garden...the seashore...a mountain top. Be there completely. Feel the sun on your face or body, the breeze, the smell of flowers or pine. Hear the rustling of leaves, water splashing, whatever natural sounds belong in your special place.