



Quick relaxation techniques

Different relaxation techniques appeal to different people. Please try out each technique and rate it out of 10, then choose the one(s) that suit you best.

Whole body tension

- Tense everything in your whole body, stay with that tension.
- Hold it as long as you can without feeling pain.
- Slowly release the tension and very gradually feel it leave your body.
- Repeat three times.

Score out of 10: _____

Imagine air as a cloud

- Open your imagination and focus on your breathing.
- As your breathing becomes calm and regular, imagine that the air comes to you as a cloud.
- It fills you and goes out.
- You may imagine the cloud to be a particular colour.

Score out of 10: _____

Pick a spot

- With your head level and body relaxed, pick a spot to focus on (eyes open point).
- When ready, count five breaths backward.
- With each breath allow your eyes to close gradually.
- Concentrate on each breath
- When you get to one, your eyes will be closed. Focus on the feelings of relaxation.

Score out of 10: _____

Counting ten breaths back

- Allow yourself to feel passive and indifferent, counting each breath slowly from 10 to one.
- With each count, allow yourself to feel heavier and more relaxed.
- With each exhale, allow the tension to leave your body.

Score out of 10: _____

Transformations: pick one that works or make up your own

When you think of images like....

- Tightly twisted ropes. Imagine... The twisted ropes untwisting
- Feel of cold, harsh wind. Imagine.... The cold wind becoming warm and soft.
- Hard, cold wax. Imagine.... The wax softens and melts
- Tense, red muscles. Imagine.... The red muscles soften or lighten to pink

Score out of 10: _____

Affirmations: pick one that works or make up your own

- When you think of images like....
- This discomfort will pass, let it go...
- Let the tension flow away....
- I have the power to handle this...
- I am calm and relaxed and ready for anything...
- Relax the jaw, lower the shoulders....

Score out of 10: _____

Background notes

Relaxation has been described as 'a state of consciousness characterised by feelings of peace and release from tension, anxiety and fear'. The term is usually taken to mean either lack of muscle tension or lack of inner 'mental tension'.

Early relaxation techniques often involved progressive muscle relaxation with attention to breathing, such as Jacobsen's progressive relaxation, first described in the late 1930s.

It is now recognised that there is a myriad of techniques to suit different personality types and problems. Some people also encounter problems with 'letting go' and can become panicky when they try and relax. Consider different types of relaxation techniques.

It is helpful to find out what happens to you when you are tense:

- How do you know you are tense?
- What happens first? What next?
- What helps? What doesn't?
- Have you had problems with previous attempts at relaxation?

It is also helpful to know your individual style. Do you like to picture things? Read things? Listen to things? Do something?