



RELAXATION BREATHING

Proper breathing can be an antidote to stress. It cleanses and refreshes your body. This technique is portable and easy to do.

- Begin by sitting or standing up straight.
- Inhale through your nose, expanding your diaphragm. An indication that you are breathing properly is that your stomach will rise when you inhale.
- Hold the breath briefly.
- Slowly exhale through the mouth, allowing your stomach to fall.
- As you exhale tell yourself "my body is relaxed and calm."

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (PMR)

PMR helps to condition your body to respond when muscles are tense. This technique can be practiced lying down or in a chair. Tense each muscle group holding it for a few moments and then let it relax. This will allow you to experience the muscle in a tense state and then a relaxed one. Here are some examples of how to tense muscle groups. This exercise is not limited to these muscle groups. Separately tense your muscles then relax them.

Head

- Wrinkle your forehead.
- Squint your eyes tightly.
- Open your mouth wide.
- Push your tongue against the roof of your open mouth.
- Clench your jaw tightly.

Thighs, Calves, Ankles and Feet

- Tighten your thigh muscles, trying not to involve abdominal muscles.
- Tense the calf muscles.
- Point your toes out directly in front of you, feeling the tension in your ankles.
- Curl your toes under, as if to touch the bottom of your feet.
- Bring your toes up as if to touch your knees.

VISUALIZATION

You can significantly reduce stress with your imagination. In creating your own special place you can make a retreat for relaxation. Here are a few guidelines:

- Allow a private entry into your place.
- Make it peaceful, comfortable and safe.
- Fill your place with sensuous detail.
- Allow room for an inner guide or other person to be with you comfortably.

MASSAGE

Massage can help you relax by increasing blood flow to tense areas (i.e. shoulders, back and neck). Increased blood flow relaxes muscles and removes build-up of waste products caused by tension.

MUSIC

Listen to some soothing, calm music. Often music can help us relax and retreat from the day.

EXERCISE

Physical activity can help relieve tension and refresh the body. Get a good 30-45 minute workout at least three days a week. While you are studying, take periodic breaks such as a brisk walk, to rejuvenate your body and make you more productive.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>