

Relaxation Exercise

Practice the following relaxation exercises – it takes less than five minutes at your desk. It may take several weeks to notice a difference, but once it is mastered, you will face stressful situations with less anxiety.

Sit tall in your chair – spine straight, shoulders down and slightly back.

Head – slowly take chin to chest (feel the nice stretch along the back of your neck) and slowly come up. Now take your right ear toward your right shoulder and up then repeat on the left side. Do not rush; take it slow and steady. Now place your left hand on your right knee, place your right hand on the right arm of your chair or hold on to the right side of the seat of your chair, twist slowly looking over your right shoulder – take a few breaths – repeat on the other side. Remember to stay tall.

Arms – placing your arms at your sides – clench fists and raise arms slightly, hold the tension, and release. Repeat.

Breathe – breathe in through your nose for four counts and exhale for eight counts (if you find this difficult, try 2/4 or 3/6 – you should exhale double the time of your inhale). It is important to breath in and out through your nose, as there is important filtering and moisturizing that happens when you do this. As you breath in – follow your breath in (your belly will rise) and follow your breath out (your belly will lower).

Legs – Stretch both your legs out, holding them in the air. Flex your feet toward you, tense your muscles and release, letting your legs drop on to the floor. Repeat.

Stomach – Tighten your stomach muscles take a deep breath and hold the tension. Release and let your breath out through your nose. Repeat.

Shoulders – shrug your shoulders so that they reach toward your ears then let them drop and relax. Repeat three times. Place your hands behind you and clasp your hands together. Bring your shoulders back and lift your arms slightly – take three breaths. Give yourself a shoulder massage – right hand to left shoulder and side of neck and repeat on the right side (left hand to right shoulder).

Head and Face – Raise eyebrows – hold and release. Close eyes very tightly and open. Clench teeth, feel tension and then release. Let your jaw drop slightly. Open mouth wide and move from side to side – relax mouth. Turn your head and look to the right and then turn your head and look to the left.

To end – lean back in your chair and just relax. Try and think of your favorite place – visualize this. Breathing deeply and consistently - take three more conscious breaths before carrying on with your day.

Note: Breathing is what keeps us alive but we rarely take the time to focus on our breath. Proper breathing is the key to relaxation. Most of us breathe incorrectly, using no more than a third of our lung capacity. We tend to take very shallow breath, while we should be breathing deep and slow.