

# Autogenic relaxation technique

The aim of this information sheet is to remind you about how you can manage your stress using the autogenic relaxation technique. This is a technique that encourages you to gradually relax different muscles in your body via your thoughts. You should have already practised this technique with your occupational therapist or as part of the cardiovascular rehab programme. You may want to ask a family member or friend to read it out to help you relax. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your occupational therapist or a member of the cardiovascular rehabilitation team.

## What is the purpose of the technique?

Relaxation can help to relieve the symptoms of stress. Although the cause of the anxiety will not disappear, you will probably feel more able to deal with it once you have released the tension in your body and cleared your thoughts.

The autogenic relaxation technique involves relaxing the muscles to make you feel calmer. Don't worry if you find it difficult to relax at first. It is a skill that needs to be learned and it will come with practice.

## How do I prepare to relax?

Allow yourself 15–20 minutes for this relaxation. Find a place that is warm, quiet and free from disturbances. If possible dim the lights and tell people that you should not be disturbed – you may want to switch off any phones. Take a few moments to get yourself as comfortable as possible. Make sure that your back and head are supported and comfortable. Your hands and arms should be loose, either resting on your lap or down by your side. Make sure that you are not clasping your hands or clenching your fists.

Your legs and feet should be loose in front of you. Make sure that your legs and ankles are not crossed. If you are lying down, let your feet turn out to relax the muscles on the inside legs.

**If you can, ask a friend or family member to read the next sections to you.**

## What do I need to do?

Close your eyes and spend a few moments concentrating on your breathing. Be aware of your breathing and the gentle rise and fall of your chest. Be aware of the air entering and leaving your lungs, and your body loosening and relaxing a little more each time you breathe out.

And now concentrate on your legs and feet. See if there is any tension in your feet or ankles. If there is any tension, let it go. Let the tension drain away. Let your ankles and feet loosen and unwind to become comfortable and relaxed.

And now let go of any tension in your knees and the lower part of your legs, let your knees loosen. Let the muscles in the lower part of your legs feel loose, comfortable and relaxed. Now let go of any tension in your hips and thighs. Let your hips loosen, let your thighs loosen.

Your thighs and hips are feeling comfortable and relaxed. Your legs and feet are feeling loose, heavy, comfortable and relaxed. Feel your legs and feet growing heavier and more comfortable as you let them relax more and more.

Now concentrate on your back. Let go of any tension in your back. Make sure that it is comfortable and supported. Let your back grow more and more comfortable and relaxed.

And now let go of any tension in your chest. Let your chest loosen and relax. You are breathing easily, comfortably and relaxed. Your back, chest and stomach are feeling comfortable and relaxed.

And now concentrate on your hands and arms. Let go of any tension in your hands and wrists, let them loosen and feel comfortable and relaxed.

Now let go of any tension in your elbows and arms. Let your elbows go loose, let the muscles in your arms unwind. Let your elbows and arms feel loose, comfortable and relaxed.

And now concentrate on your shoulders. Let go of any tension in them, let it drain away. Let the muscles loosen and unwind so that your shoulders are comfortable and relaxed.

And now let go of any tension in your neck. Let the muscles in your neck loosen and unwind so that they feel comfortable and relaxed. Feel your neck and your shoulders growing more comfortable as you let them relax more and more.

And now concentrate on your face. Let go of any tension in your face. Let your jaw go loose and slack and check that your tongue is in a comfortable position. Let the skin around your eyes smooth out. Check that your eyes are light and comfortably closed. Let your forehead smooth out. Feel your face growing calmer and smoother as you let it relax more and more.

Be aware of that comfortable relaxed feeling throughout your whole body. Be aware of your body growing heavier, more comfortable as it relaxes, and be aware of your body loosening and relaxing a little more each time you breathe out. Be aware of how comfortable it feels as you let your body relax and enjoy that feeling for a short time.

## How do I end the relaxation session?

Let yourself come to slowly. When you are ready, you may open your eyes. When you are ready to get up, get up slowly, feeling comfortable and relaxed.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about this relaxation technique, contact **Occupational Therapy, t: 020 7188 4180** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm) or the **Cardiovascular Rehabilitation Team, t: 020 7188 0946** (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm).

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