

The Jane Madders relaxation technique

The aim of this information sheet is to remind you about how you can manage your stress using the Jane Madders relaxation technique. This is a technique that uses muscle relaxation to make you feel calmer. 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 Jane Madders 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. Make yourself comfortable on the floor, on the bed or in a chair. Snuggle down and settle your body so that it feels limp.

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

What do I need to do?

Begin by letting your breath out and then breathe in as far as you want to. Wait for just a moment, then breathe out slowly, relaxing into the floor or the chair as you do so. Do this once more, very slowly and, as you breathe out, feel the tension draining away. Now go back to your ordinary breathing. Keep it even, calm, easy, and then forget about it.

Think about your left foot. Your toes are quite still and if you are lying down your ankle is rolling outwards. Then the other foot.....your toes.....your ankle. Let the feeling of relaxation spread up your legs so that they are resting heavily on the ground or chair. The floor/chair is doing all the supporting so there is no need for the muscles to work. If you are lying down, your thighs roll outwards when they are relaxed. They may feel sagging and heavy.

Now let the relaxation spread to the pelvic area and let all those muscles relax. Your hips rest heavily on the floor or chair.

Feel your spine touching the support and let the muscles of your back relax. Let your tummy muscles go soft and loose. As you breathe evenly and calmly these muscles rise and fall.

Think about the fingers of your left hand. They are limp, still and curved. Then let that feeling of relaxation spread up your arm. It is fully supported so there is no need for the muscles to work. You can feel the contact of the support. Now do the same with your right arm... Your fingers still and curved, your arm floppy and loose.

Now your shoulders. Let them go. Now let them go even further.

Your neck muscles will relax when your head takes its fair share of the weight. It should be resting quite heavily on the floor or the pillow. You are not holding it at all. Let it rest.

Now your face. Make sure you are not holding your teeth tightly together. When you can let those worry muscles relax on your forehead, the feeling of calm and peace spreads to the rest of the body. When you relax, your forehead feels a little higher than before. This spreads to the scalp so that any tension there gently fades.

Your eyes are closed softly, with the eyelids still.

Your lips are soft and hardly touching and your tongue is shapeless. Make sure it is not pressed hard against the roof of your mouth.

Your cheeks are soft and relaxed because there is no need to keep an expression on your face.

Now, instead of thinking of yourself in parts, be aware of the whole body, relaxing quite heavily on the floor. Your whole body feels relaxed and fully supported. You are not working at all. Let all the tension go. Then a little more than you thought you could.

Stay quietly like this, and if after half a minute you find your mind is busy and active again, check up on each part of the body and let it relax. When images drift into your mind, just acknowledge them and let them pass. You are acting as a bystander, interested, but not involved. Soon, as your muscles relax, you will begin to feel peaceful and at rest.....

When you are feeling peaceful and relaxed, say to yourself "I am calm, I am relaxed".

How do I end the relaxation session?

Move one fist, tighten it gently and let the tension go. Do the same with the other one. Then open your eyes, lie still, and become aware of your surroundings. Sit up slowly, have a stretch and perhaps a yawn, and a deeper breath, then stand up.

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).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets