Relaxation Techniques

Liz McKinney, Ph.D.
GRCC Counselor

This Powerpoint presentation will be available at
www.greenriver.edu/counselingandhealth/workshops_events.shtm
All stress isn’t bad,
Your Stress Out Style,
Three relaxation techniques:
  Deep breathing
  Progressive muscle relaxation
  Visual imagery
YouTube: The Biology of Stress (Mental Health Guru)
The stress response is meant to keep you alive. Stress is good, but not too much or for too long. Not only bad things cause stress.
What’s Your Stress Out Style?

1. When I get stressed, I feel it in my body (heart races, muscles tense/ache, headaches, dizziness, upset stomach).
2. I notice that I get sick more when I’m stressed out.
3. I tend to worry about things a lot, especially when I’m trying to fall asleep.
4. When I’m worried about something, it’s often times because I’m thinking about the worst possible outcome of a situation (worst case scenario).
5. When I’m stressed I feel overwhelmed.
6. When I’m stressed I get emotional or I disconnect from my emotions.
If you answered “true” to 1 and 2, you may tend to experience stress **physically** (symptoms in your body).

If you answered “true” to 3 and 4, you may tend to experience stress **cognitively** (thoughts in your mind).

If you answered “true” to 5 and 6, you may tend to experience stress **emotionally** (intense feelings or disconnection from feelings).
It’s physiologically impossible to be relaxed and anxious at the same time.

Deep states of relaxation are associated with improved health: decreased heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, skeletal muscle tension.

Stress is associated with compromised health.
Three Relaxation Techniques

- Deep breathing
  - Physical
  - Cognitive
  - Emotional
- Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Physical
  - Cognitive
- Visual imagery
  - Cognitive
  - Emotional
It’s one of the easiest ways to relax, requires no special equipment, can be done anywhere.
Deep, diaphragmatic breathing relaxes the muscles that press against your diaphragm and slows your breathing rate.
As few as three or four slow, deep breaths can bring instant relaxation.
Try deep breathing for 5 – 10 minutes at a time, a few times a day.
Get comfortable.
Notice your breathing.
Let go of tension in your body.
Place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach.
Notice which hand moves, focus on pushing out your stomach, moving the hand on your stomach.
Inhale deeply (in.......relax......), exhale slowly (two.......relax......), repeat.
Go at your own pace.
Those who have medical problems should first consult their physician before practicing PMR.

Mental and physical stress are connected.

Tensing and then suddenly relaxing muscles can produce a deep state of relaxation.

Try PMR for about 20 minutes, daily.

Once you become skilled, you can scan your body and work on those areas that are tense.
Tense a muscle group for seven seconds and suddenly release the tension. Stay relaxed for 20 seconds. Repeat with the same muscle group.

Move through your body, tensing and relaxing muscle groups: arms first, then head, midsection, and legs.

Notice the difference between the tense state of your muscles and the relaxed state of your muscles.
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

YouTube: Guided Progressive Muscle Relaxation with Yoga Jane Training
Relax by creating, remembering, or visiting a peaceful, calming scene in your mind.
“When have I felt at peace, safe, able to let my guard down?”
See the scene from your perspective.
Close your eyes, let your imagination run free.
Gently refocus if you get distracted.
Different people are more or less visual, practice, practice, practice.
Let all of your senses help with making this mental image as real as possible:

- Where am I? What does this place look like?
- What is around me? Who is around me?
- How does it sound? What scents are in the air?
- What physical sensations do I feel? What can I taste?

Some ideas: a wonderful vacation you went on, a day when something great happened in your life, a place you’ve always wanted to visit.
Quick Tips

- Prioritize relaxation as part of your self-care (schedule it in, work it in).
- Experiment with the different strategies, mix & match.
- Go back to what worked when you were younger.
- Take a moment at the start of each day to focus on the present and anything for which you are grateful.
- Keep a picture of something/someone close by that brings you joy (child, pet, vacation).
- “How likely is it that the worst-case scenario will happen?” “What if it does?”
- Work on letting go of those things you don’t have control over.
- Laugh!
Develop a phrase you can say to yourself that will remind you to relax.

YouTube: Goosfraba