

The Skills of Relaxation

with Chris Morin

re·lax·a·tion/rē,lak'seiSH(ə)n/

noun

- 1.the state of being free from tension and anxiety.
- 2.the restoration of equilibrium following disturbance.

Great Words: **Free/Equilibrium**

What does it mean to Relax?

It is an action or a state of being

re-lax/rə'laks/

verb

1. make or become less tense or anxious.

Like most physical actions it takes practice to get good at it.

Goal is to create a

Relaxation

Response

which is opposite

to the

Stress Response

Relaxation Techniques

Create a Relaxation Response

muscle tension decreases

blood pressure goes down

breathing slows down

the mind becomes calm

increased somatic awareness

and the harmful effects of prolonged stress are counteracted.

Creates an increased control over the body's responses to stress

Create a
Relaxation
Response
through
Relaxation
Techniques

These Techniques Work

More than 3,000 studies show the beneficial effects of relaxation on health and wellbeing.

Source: [Relaxation techniques | University of Maryland Medical Center http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/treatment/relaxation-techniques#ixzz3jGdfujv5](http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/treatment/relaxation-techniques#ixzz3jGdfujv5)

University of Maryland Medical Center

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Know your Body through Assessments

You can protect yourself by learning how to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress overload and take steps to control or reduce its harmful effects.

Knowing your body signals will allow you to relax better.

Assessments to help in Relaxation and to Recognize the Signs of Stress

Heart Rate
Respiration Rate
Breathing Pattern
Posture
Muscle Tension

Assessment 1

Heart Rate

Lets get some Biofeedback and see if the relaxation techniques that we will do today work by measuring resting heart rate before and after each technique!

Heart Rate

Measuring heart rate manually takes some practice. When measuring manually, I prefer finger placement at the radial artery (thumb-side of wrist) versus the carotid artery (neck) due to a possible receptor response, which some studies suggest may slow heart rate. I like to count the number of beats over 15 seconds then multiply by 4 to get beats per minute. If I feel a beat at the start of the 15 second count, I start counting from zero. A sign of a efficient healthy heart in most cases is a slow heart rate.



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The average pulse rate for an adult is approximately 70-80 beats per minute. A faster heart beat may be an indicator of higher than desired stress levels.

Assessment 2

Breathing Pattern

Breathing Pattern

Sit in the chair so your back is primarily straight up and down against the back of the chair. Place one hand on your abdomen with your palm covering your navel. Place your other hand on the upper part of your chest with the palm of that hand just above the heart. For a minute or two, become very aware of your breathing. While sitting straight up, notice your breath as it goes in and comes back out. Become aware of your hands as you breathe in and out. Which one seems to move more? Is it your abdominal hand or your chest hand? Or do they both move equally?

Try this second technique to see if you get the same results. First, breathe out and empty your lungs. Count to three as you inhale deeply. Now, hold it. Did your shoulders go up? Did you feel like the air filled the upper part of your lungs? If so, you probably lean toward chest breathing. If you are a diaphragmatic breather, you would feel your abdominal area expand, your belt tighten, and fullness in the lower part of your lungs and chest.

Were you primarily a chest breather or an abdominal breather? Many of us are primarily chest, or thoracic, breathers. Chest breathers tend to take shallower breathes. Diaphragmatic, or abdominal, breathing involves the abdominal muscles to facilitate deeper breathing. This allows you to take in more oxygen with each breath.

Deep diaphragmatic or abdominal breathing is an important relaxation technique.

Assessment 3

Breathing Rate

Breathing Rate

For about a minute, become aware of your breathing again. This time, just count how many natural, effortless breaths you take in a minute. Be sure to breathe as normally and naturally as possible. Each inhalation and exhalation cycle is considered one breath. The number of breathes in one minute is your *respiration rate*. Record the number of breaths you take.

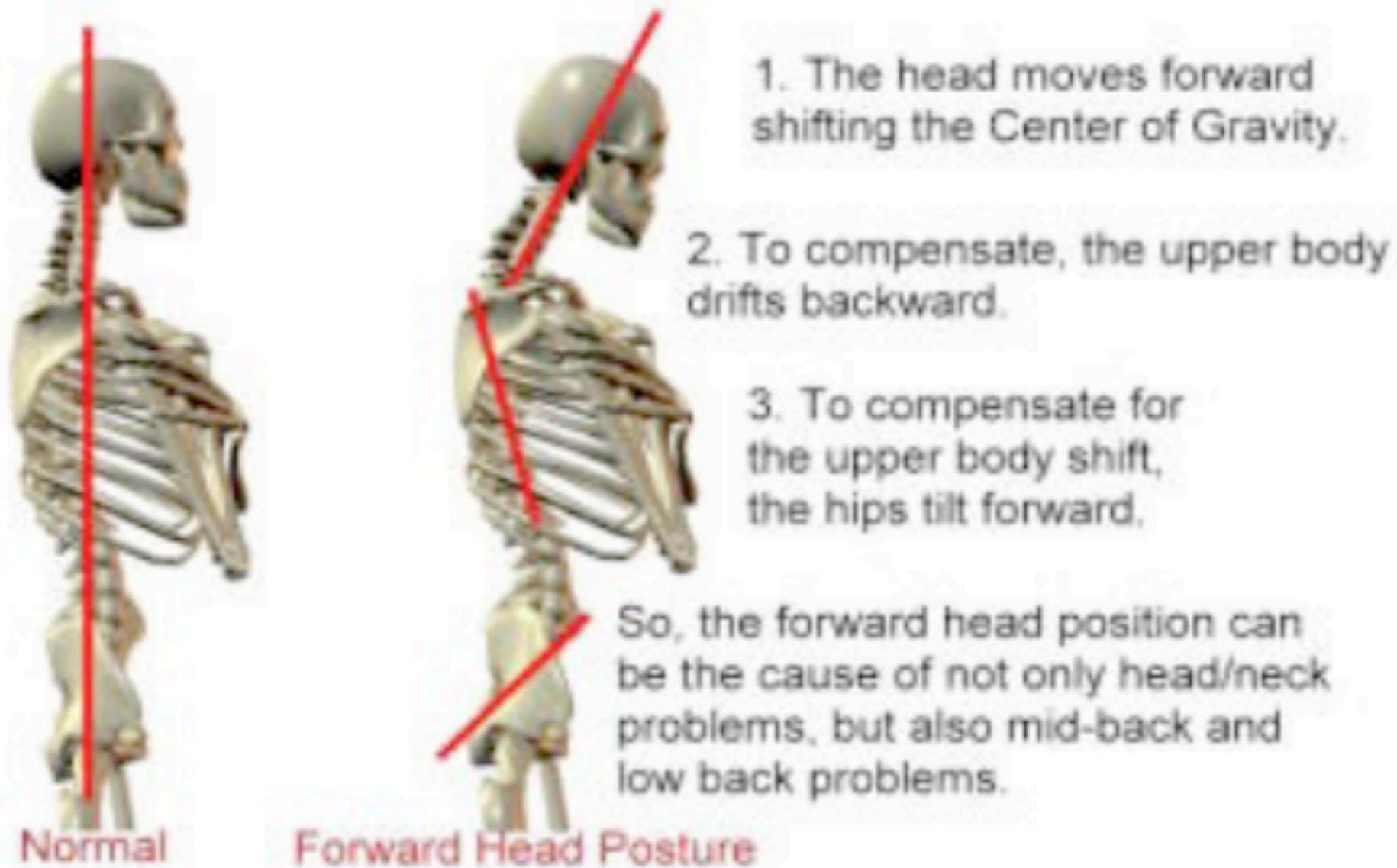
The average respiration rate is around 12-16 breaths per minute. A faster heart beat or breathing rate might be an indicator of higher than desired stress levels.



Assessment 4
Posture
Muscle Tension

Dangers of Forward Head Posture

The Domino Effect



People who have forward head posture typically are chest breathers

Posture

Emotional stress can lead to poor posture.

When we are stressed we can feel depressed resulting in poor posture.

When we feel bad we tend to stand with rounded shoulders, forward head tilt and flat or sway back.

This posture can eventually lead to chronic pain and myofascial pain symptoms.

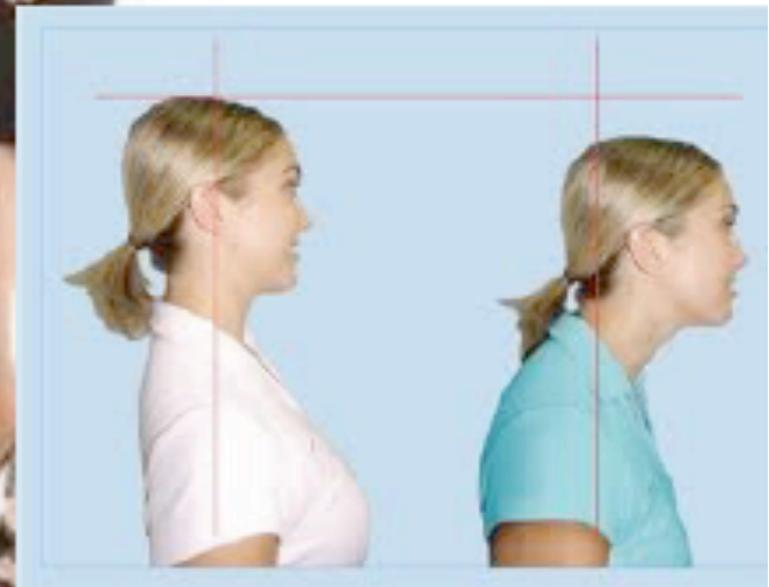
prolonged poor posture



myofascial pain symptoms



Do you have these postures?



Power Pose Wonder Woman



By holding this posture for just two minutes before entering a high-stress situation, people (both men and women) can increase their testosterone by about 20% and decrease their cortisol by about 25%

AMY J.C. CUDDY

Amy J.C. Cuddy is an Associate Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School.

Muscle Tension

Muscle holding/bracing if prolonged causes muscles to become hyperactive

May cause dysfunction

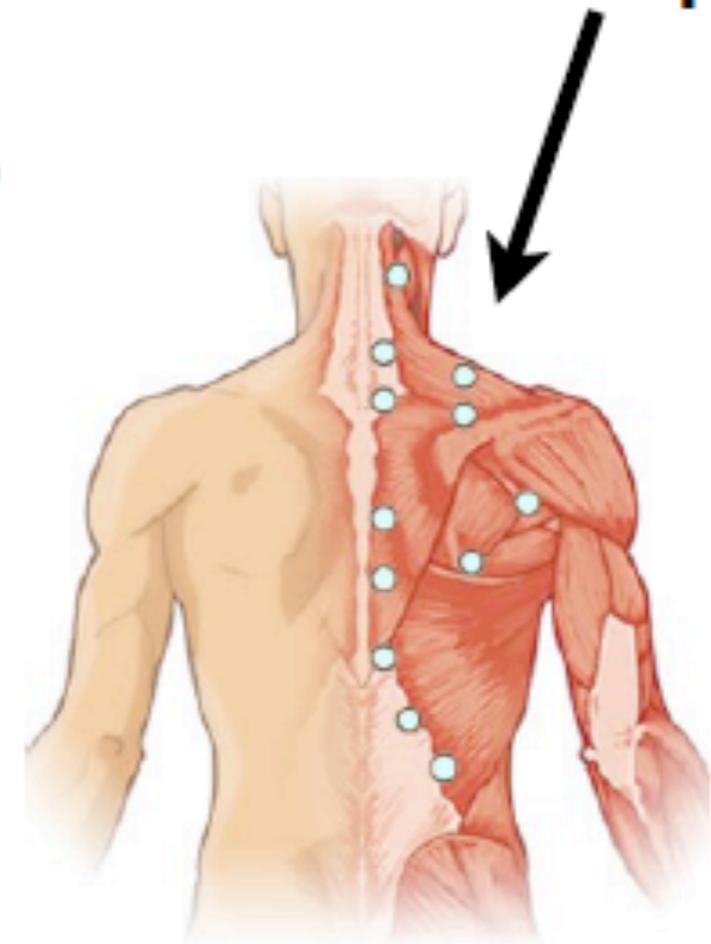
How Does Stress Affect Our Muscle?

Muscle Tension from stress may become sustained or may increase. Could develop adhesion, trigger point, or scar tissue.

Tension may not only prolong a condition it may be the cause of a new dysfunction.

Most physical therapists agree patients who are stressed or tense will take a lot longer to treat and take more time to recover.

Are you tense in these spots?



Are you Trap Dominate?



Relaxation Techniques

Goal is to evoke the body's relaxation response.

A state of restfulness that is the opposite of the stress response.

What are the types of relaxation techniques?

Major types of relaxation techniques that we will do in a class format:

Diaphragmatic Breathing: In breathing techniques, you place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Take a slow, deep breath, sucking in as much air as you can. As you're doing this, your belly should push against your hand. Hold your breath and then slowly exhale.

Progressive muscle relaxation: This technique involves slowly tensing and then releasing each muscle group individually, starting with the muscles in the toes and finishing with those in the head.

Meditation: The two most popular forms of meditation in the U.S. include Transcendental Meditation (students repeat a *mantra* -- a single word or phrase) and mindfulness meditation (students focus their attention on their thoughts and sensations).

Guided imagery: Similar to autogenic training, guided imagery involves listening to a trained therapist or a guided imagery CD to move into a state of deep relaxation. Once in a relaxed state, the images that come up in your mind can help you uncover important realizations about your emotional, spiritual, and physical health.

Autogenic training: This technique uses both visual imagery and body awareness to move a person into a deep state of relaxation. The person imagines a peaceful place and then focuses on different physical sensations, moving from the feet to the head. For example, one might focus on warmth and heaviness in the limbs, easy, natural breathing, or a calm heartbeat.

Relaxation Exercises

No right or wrong way to relax

There is no one technique that will work for everyone

Find out which ones work the best for you

Some people may experience feelings of emotional discomfort during some relaxation techniques. Although this is rare, if you experience emotional discomfort during relaxation techniques, stop what you're doing.

Tips to Optimize Your Success With Relaxation: From Inner Health

1. Adopt a **passive attitude**. Let it Happen!
2. Relax in a **quiet environment** with few distractions.
3. **Make yourself comfortable**. Choose a comfortable position that you can maintain for at least 10 minutes.
4. **Start with short relaxation sessions**, about 5 minutes with practice, work toward longer sessions
5. **Set aside time to relax each day**. Maybe before bed, first thing in the morning or when stress level is high or your energy is low.
6. **Keep experimenting!**

Try a **relaxation quiz** to find out which techniques may suit you best. Give Chris your email.

Perform an Assessment
after each technique to
judge your progress.

The Key for all Relaxation Techniques is Breathing

We can live more than 50 days without food and about 7 days without water, but, without oxygen we cannot survive more than about 5 minutes.

In many cultures, breath
(*qi, chi, prana*)
is considered the vital link to energy, awareness, composure, and ultimately to transcendence.

Your body's levels of stress hormones are regulated by the ***Involuntary (autonomic) nervous system (ANS)***

Two components that balance each other, the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS).

The SNS turns up your nervous system. It helps us handle what we perceive to be emergencies and is in charge of the flight-or-fight and freeze and dissociate response .

Cortisol
Adrenalin

The PNS turns down the nervous system and helps us to be calm. It promotes relaxation, rest, sleep, and drowsiness by slowing our heart rate, slowing our breathing and muscle tension, and promotes digestion.

The PNS counters the effects of SNS

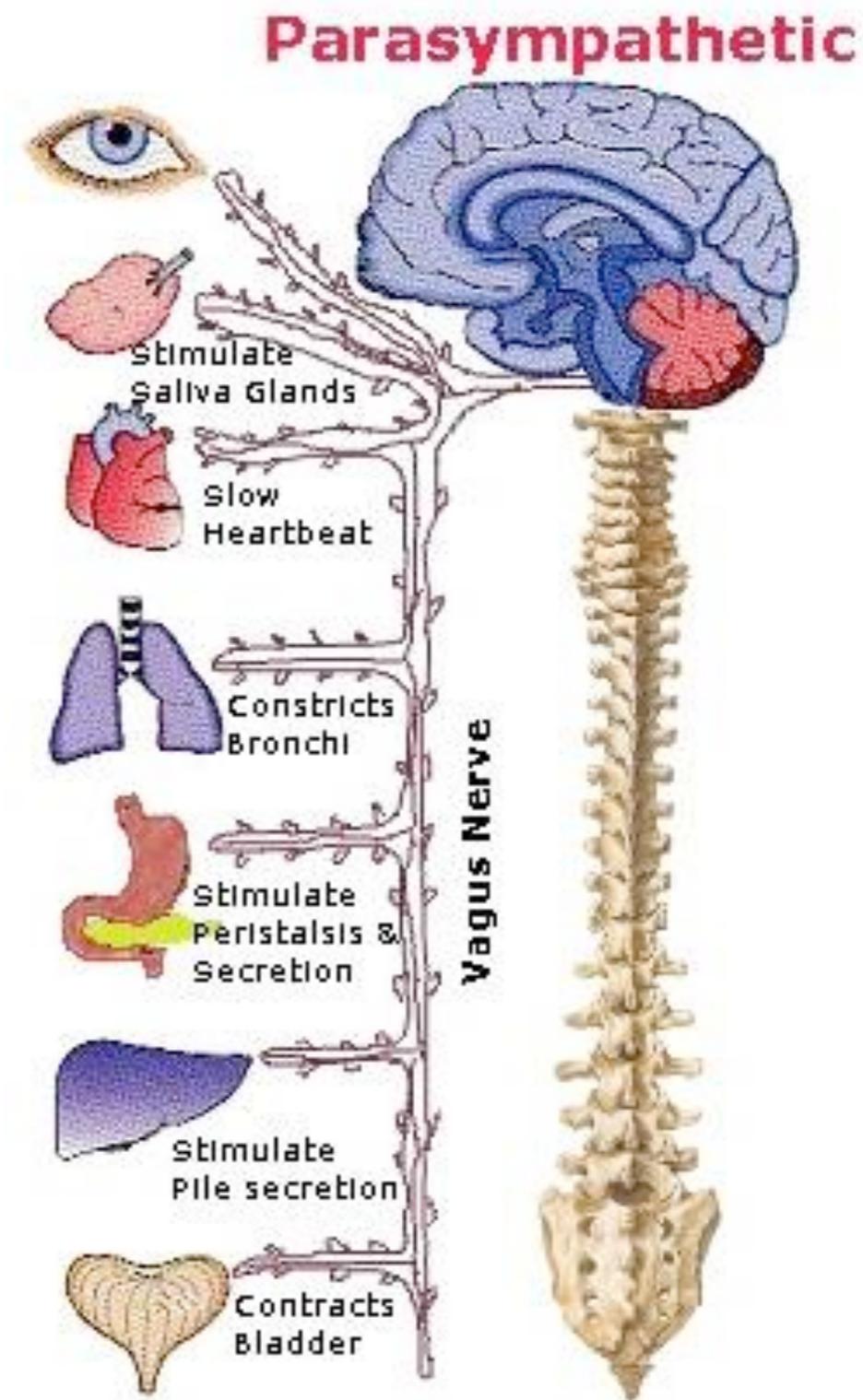
Deep Breathing

You can't control the stress response—it's automatic—you can control the relaxation response.

The **vagus nerve** is a nerve that comes from the brain and goes to the diaphragm and helps control the parasympathetic nervous system, which controls the relaxation response.

When you take a deep breath and relax and expand your diaphragm, your vagus system is stimulated, you instantly turn on the parasympathetic nervous system and starts a relaxation response.

Even *one* conscious breath begins to activate your vagus nerve and kicks off a wonderful cascade of benefits.



“Deep diaphragmatic breathing stimulates the cleansing of the lymph system by creating a vacuum effect which pulls the lymph through the bloodstream. This increases the rate of toxic elimination by as much as 15 times the normal rate.” ~ Dr. Jack W. Shields, M.D.,

The **lymphatic system** is a network of tissues and organs that help rid the body of toxins, waste and other unwanted materials. The primary function of the **lymphatic system** is to transport **lymph**, a fluid containing infection-fighting white blood cells, throughout the body.

Relaxation technique 1

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Lets Practice Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing, or deep breathing from the diaphragm rather than the chest, is a great way to relax and reduce anxiety.

How to practice diaphragmatic breathing

1. Find a quiet place free of distractions. Lie on the floor or recline in a chair, loosen any tight clothing and remove glasses or contacts. Rest your hands in your lap or on the arms of the chair.
2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other hand on your stomach. Inhale, taking a deep breath from your abdomen as you count to three. As you inhale you should feel your stomach rise up. The hand on your chest should not move.
3. After a short pause of a 2 count, slowly exhale while counting to six.
4. Your stomach should fall back down as you exhale.
5. Continue this pattern of rhythmic breathing for five to ten minutes.

Revised by C. Morin from McMaster University. Guided Relaxation CD.

Is sighing a bad thing?

Is sighing a bad sign?

A few studies that suggest it's not only a sign of communication, but it's also a breathing method that makes us feel better.

So in times of stress, when breathing is less variable, a sigh can reset the respiratory system and loosen the lung's air sacs, or alveoli, which may be accompanied by a sensation of relief, said Frank Wilhelm a clinical psychologist at the Universität Basel in Switzerland.

If you put in a few sigh breaths in your day you may feel feel but not all the time.

But too much sighing can add too much noise to the system and can also throw the system out of whack. This appears to be what happens to people experiencing panic attacks, said Wilhelm.

People experiencing panic attacks have been long observed to involve a great deal of sighing, and show all the symptoms of hyperventilation: dizziness, numbness in the extremities, etc., he said.

A study by Vlemincx and colleagues at University of Leuven suggests that, indeed, sighing acts as a physical—and mental—reset. discovery.com

By studying breathing patterns of participants for 20 minutes while sitting quietly, the authors found that during the time preceding a sigh, breathing begins to vary, changing in speed or shallowness. When breathing in one state for too long, Vlemincx says, the lungs become stiffer and less efficient in gas exchange. Intermittently adding a sigh to the normal pattern, then, stretches the lung's air sacs (alveoli). This feeling may give one a sense of relief.

Relaxation technique 2

Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is an anxiety-reduction technique first introduced by American physician Edmund Jacobson in the 1930s. The technique involves alternating tension and relaxation in all the body's major muscle groups. If you suffer with anxiety or are very tense, chances are that the majority of the time your muscles are tense. By practicing PMR, you will learn how a relaxed muscle feels different from a tense muscle. Practicing the technique alone will give you a greater sense of control over your body's anxiety response.

If you practice this technique correctly, you just may end up falling asleep.

Source: Jacobson, E. (1938). Progressive relaxation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

How to practice progressive muscle relaxation

1. Find a quiet place free from distractions. Lie on the floor or recline in a chair, loosen any tight clothing and remove glasses or contacts. Rest your hands in your lap or on the arms of the chair.

2. Take a few slow even breaths (diaphragmatic breathing).

Feet. Slowly, increase the tension in your feet and toes over 15 seconds.. Tighten the muscles as much as you can. Then, slowly release the tension while you count for 30 seconds. Notice all the tension melting away. Continue breathing

slowly and evenly.

Legs. Slowly, increase the tension in your quadriceps and calves over 15 seconds. Squeeze the muscles as hard as you

can. Then, gently release the tension over 30 seconds. Notice the tension melting away and the feeling of relaxation that is left.

Buttocks. Slowly increase tension in your buttocks over 15 seconds. Then, slowly release the tension over 30 seconds. Notice the tension melting away. Continue to breathe slowly and evenly.

Arms and Hands. Slowly draw both hands into fists. Pull your fists into your chest and hold for 15 seconds, squeezing as tight as you can. Then, slowly release while you count for 30 seconds. Notice the feeling of relaxation.

Shoulder Blades. Squeeze the muscles between your shoulder blades holding for 15 seconds. Then, release the tension

slowly while counting for 30 seconds. Notice the feeling of relaxation and continue to breathe slowly and evenly.

Neck and Shoulders. Now, shift attention to your neck and shoulders. Increase tension in your neck and shoulders by raising your shoulders up towards your ears and hold for 15 seconds. Slowly release the tension as you count for 30 seconds. Notice the tension melting away.

Forehead. Focus attention on your forehead. Squeeze the muscles in your forehead, holding for 15 seconds. Be careful only to tense the muscles of your forehead and to leave the rest of your body relaxed. Feel the muscles becoming tighter

and tenser. Then, slowly release the tension in your forehead while counting for 30 seconds. Notice the difference in how

your muscles feel and the sensation of relaxation. Continue to release the tension in your forehead until it feels completely relaxed. Continue breathing slowly and evenly.

Enjoy the feeling of relaxation sweeping through your body. Continue to breathe slowly and evenly.

Source: Jacobson, E. (1938). Progressive relaxation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Relaxation technique 3

Meditation

Benson Relaxation Response - Diaphragmatic Breathing with a Mantra

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
 2. Close your eyes.
 3. Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep them relaxed. [Relax your tongue—and thoughts will cease.]
 4. Breathe through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say the word "one"* silently to yourself. For example, breathe in, and then out, and say "one"*, in and out, and repeat "one."* Breathe easily and naturally.
 5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes opened. Do not stand up for a few minutes.
 6. Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, try to ignore them by not dwelling upon them and return to repeating "one."*
 7. With practice, the response should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice daily, but not within two hours after any meal, since the digestive processes seem to interfere with the elicitation of the Relaxation Response.
- *Choose any soothing word preferably with no meaning or association, in order to avoid stimulation of unnecessary thoughts.

Revised by C. Morin from McMaster University. Guided Relaxation CD.

Meditation Points

There is **no right or wrong** way to meditate. Whatever you experience during this breathing meditation is right for you. Don't try to make anything happen, just observe.

During this meditation, it is normal for your mind to wander. When you notice your **attention drifting, simply focus again on your breathing.** Try to passively accept thoughts that enter your mind, and allow them to pass without paying particular attention to them.

Relaxation technique 4

Guided Imagery

Visualization Technique

Visualization techniques are useful for people who find it difficult to meditate on words or phrases.

Some visualize a particular object, such as a painting, a photo, or a tranquil scene.

Others visualize a particular color as they meditate, and they relate that color to the rhythm of their breathing.

For example, as they breathe in, they breathe in blue.

As they exhale the blue leaves their body through their feet, legs, torso, head, and finally through their lungs.

Visualization allows us to communicate with our subconscious as we meditate. What you visualize within you is entirely up to you and your imagination. After all, it is our imagination which creates the pictures in our minds.

Start reading the beach visualization relaxation script here:

Get comfortable.

Feel your arms and legs becoming loose and relaxed...

Breathe deeply into your diaphragm, drawing air fully into your lungs.... and release the air with a whooshing sound....

Draw a deep breath in.... and out....

Become more and more relaxed with each breath....

Feel your body giving up all the tension.... becoming relaxed.... and calm.... peaceful....

Feel a wave of relaxation flow from the soles of your feet, to your ankles, lower legs, hips, pelvic area, abdomen, chest, back, hands, lower arms, elbows, upper arms, shoulders, neck, back of your head, face, and the top of your head....

Allow your entire body to rest heavily on the surface where you sit or lie. Now that your body is fully relaxed, allow the visualization relaxation to begin.

Imagine you are walking toward the ocean.... walking through a beautiful, tropical forest....

You can hear the waves up ahead.... you can smell the ocean spray.... the air is moist and warm.... feel a pleasant, cool breeze blowing through the trees....

You walk along a path....coming closer to the sea....as you come to the edge of the trees, you see the brilliant aqua color of the ocean ahead....

You walk out of the forest and onto a long stretch of white sand.... the sand is very soft powder.... imagine taking off your shoes, and walking through the hot, white sand toward the water....

The beach is wide and long....

Hear the waves crashing to the shore....

Smell the clean salt water and beach....

You gaze again toward the water.... it is a bright blue-green....

See the waves washing up onto the sand..... and receding back toward the ocean.... washing up.... and flowing back down..... enjoy the ever-repeating rhythm of the waves...

Imagine yourself walking toward the water.... over the fine, hot sand.... you are feeling very hot....

As you approach the water, you can feel the mist from the ocean on your skin. You walk closer to the waves, and feel the sand becoming wet and firm....

A wave washes over the sand toward you.... and touches your toes before receding...

As you step forward, more waves wash over your feet... feel the cool water provide relief from the heat....

Walk further into the clear, clean water.... you can see the white sand under the water.... the water is a pleasant, relaxing temperature.... providing relief from the hot sun... cool but not cold....

You walk further into the water if you wish.... swim if you want to.... enjoy the ocean for a few minutes..... allow the visualization relaxation to deepen.... more and more relaxed... enjoy the ocean....

Now you are feeling calm and refreshed...

You walk back out of the water and onto the beach...

Stroll along the beach at the water's edge.... free of worries... no stress... calm..... enjoying this holiday....

Up ahead is a comfortable lounge chair and towel, just for you...

Sit or lie down in the chair, or spread the towel on the sand.... relax **on the chair** or towel.... enjoying the sun.... the breeze.... the waves.....

You feel peaceful and relaxed.... allow all your stresses to melt away....

When you are ready to return from your vacation, do so slowly....

Bring yourself back to your usual level of alertness and awareness....

Keep with you the feeling of calm and relaxation.... feeling ready to return to your day....

Open your eyes, stretch your muscles... and become fully alert... refreshed... and filled with energy.

actice this visualization relaxation as often as you wish, to provide a **mental** vacation whenever you need it. Visualization relaxation is a skill that can be learned; the more you practice, the more skilled you will

become and more effectively you will be able to relax using visualization relaxation.

Tuesday, May 20, 2014

Relaxation technique 5

Autogenics

Autogenics involves imagining that your limbs are warm and heavy, your heart rate is slow and steady. This process can induce the relaxation response.

Find a comfortable position to sit or lie down. Autogenic relaxation is an effective relaxation technique that will allow you to relax your body and calm your mind.

Begin by breathing deeply, drawing air in... deep into your lungs... and releasing the breath slowly...Continue taking slow, regular breaths.

Now turn your attention to your right hand. Feel the skin on the palm of your right hand becoming warm and relaxed. Feel the warmth in each finger....and on your palm....spreading to the back of your hand.... to your wrist....

Feel your right arm becoming warm.....

Your right arm is starting to feel very heavy.... very heavy, and very relaxed.

Your right arm is warm, heavy, and relaxed.

Now focus on your left hand. Picture placing your left hand into soothing, warm water. Feel the warmth relaxing your hand completely. Allow your wrist to enter the warm, calming water..... and relax. Your arm is becoming heavy. Allow your left arm to sink into the warm water. Your left arm feels warm, heavy, and relaxed.

Now turn your attention to your legs. Feel your legs becoming warm. Feel the warmth spreading all the way from your feet.... to your ankles.....knees....and hips. Feel your legs becoming heavy.... very heavy, and very relaxed.

Your legs are warm....heavy.....and relaxed....

Imagine a warm breeze blowing across your face.... feel your face and head relaxing.... your eyelids are very heavy....

Picture the sun shining down on you....warming the front of your body..... allow your chest and stomach to relax in this warmth.... feel the sun shining....warming your skin....relaxing your body.... as your body is filled with heavy, warm, pleasant relaxation.

Now imagine sitting with your back to a pleasant campfire. Feel the warmth of the fire on your back. Feel your back warming and relaxing..... the warmth spreads all the way from your neck...to your shoulders.....your upper back....middle and lower back..... feel your body relaxing as it becomes warm and calm....

Feel the heaviness in your entire body.... your body is warm....heavy.... and relaxed...Enjoy this calm, relaxed feeling. Your body feels very heavy....warm....and relaxed...Now slowly begin to bring your attention back to the present.... keeping your eyes closed...notice the room around you....notice the surface that you are lying or sitting on.... hear the sounds in your environment.....

Gently start to reawaken your body.... wiggle your fingers and toes.. move your arms and legs a little.... stretch if you like....When you are ready, open your eyes.... and become fully alert.

List of other relaxation techniques:

Soothing music

Writing

Massage Therapy

Tai Chi

Yoga

6 Relaxation Techniques that are Actually Bad
For Your Health from Prevention

Binge-Watching Netflix

Burning Incense

Taking Bubble Baths

Checking Social Media

Going for a Run—Again

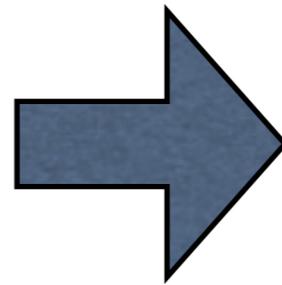
Clicking "Buy"

Sleeping In

Summary

Become Aware of your Body

- Heart Rate
- Respiration Rate
- Altered Breathing
Pattern
- Posture
- Muscle Tension



What to Do

- Practice Relaxation techniques like abdominal breathing or meditation when stressed
- Become a resilient person, accept the challenge
- Exercise/Move for 10 minutes

Become more Resilient
through knowing your
body and using these
techniques
especially the power of
deep breathing

Binge-Watching Netflix

A recent study presented at the American Public Health Association's meeting found a link between binge TV-watching, defined as 2 or more hours a day, and depression and anxiety. The researchers don't yet know which comes first—whether depression and anxiety triggers binge-watching or whether binge-watching leads to depression and anxiety—but either way, being sedentary for long stretches has been linked to mental health problems.

Burning Incense

Researchers found that incense smoke, which contains ultrafine and fine particles, some of which are highly toxic, is “mutagenic,” meaning that its chemical properties have the potential to change DNA, causing mutations that could lead to cancer. The same advice holds true for scented paraffin candles, which may emit a number of potentially hazardous chemicals that can trigger allergy and asthma attacks and even migraines,. Choose soy-based candles, which are not toxic, to keep your indoor air clear.

Taking Bubble Baths

Harsh soaps and added fragrance can strip away protective oils and irritate delicate tissues, leading to uncomfortable dryness or worse.

Checking Social Media

Studies show that social media has the potential to be both helpful and harmful. "On the one hand, those who are shy, anxious, or have unique or rare interests or problems are able to find support communities on the Web," Lyubomirsky says. "On the other hand, at least one study has shown that checking Facebook posts actually makes people less happy—in part because they implicitly compare themselves and feel like their life is not as good or exciting as that of the people posting." Try minimizing your check-ins, especially if you're already feeling stressed or down. And remember to maintain perspective: For every college acceptance or new sports car you see, there's a speeding ticket, a busted dishwasher, and a bad hair day that you don't see.

Going for a Run—Again

Exercise is fantastic for your overall health, mood, cognition, and mindset, and most Americans are guilty of not moving enough. But according to a 2015 study, you can overdo it with those long, heart-pounding runs. Danish researchers, writing in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, found that high-intensity, high-mileage runners—those exceeding 7 mph for more than 4 hours a week or sprinting more than 2.5 hours a week on 3 days or more—die at the same rate as couch potatoes. The researchers, who followed 1,098 healthy runners and 3,950 non-runners for about 12 years, believe that such strenuous running may damage the heart over time. The study didn't look at other forms of exercise, such as yoga or gardening, which are gentler on the cardiovascular system.

Clicking "Buy"

Sure, a new lipstick or a crisp new phone case is momentarily uplifting, but retail therapy goes only so far as a stress-busting strategy—because you're accruing debt and creating financial stress, possibly feeling guilty or ashamed, and cluttering up your space with stuff you likely don't need. "Research shows that materialism is ultimately harmful to happiness—not to mention our planet," says Lyubomirsky, "so if shopping essentially involves expressing materialistic impulses, then it's going to make you unhappy and potentially impair your relationships in the long term."

Sleeping In

Hiding under the covers for an extended snooze may be your idea of taking it easy, but too much sleep may be just as hazardous as too little. Research has linked chronic oversleeping—more than 9 hours a night—to heightened risk of depression, impaired brain function, weight gain, diabetes, and heart disease. And though it sounds counterintuitive, sleeping too long may actually make you feel lethargic and make it harder to focus. Sleeping past normal wakeup time on the occasional weekend is perfectly fine, but a healthy range for most people is between 7 and 9 hours a night. That will leave you rested and alert—and better able to deal with life's many curveballs.

Threat vs. Challenge when Stressed

Threat Vs. Challenge when Stressed: How You See Things Makes A Difference

says Researchers

If we feel challenged we fare better than
if we feel threatened.

Resilient people tend to view life's
difficulties as challenges

Resilient people believe that they're in
control of their lives

Do you think stress
has a large impact on
your health?

a little

a moderate amount

a lot

Stress may actually be correlated with longevity—if a person doesn't view it as a negative

The longitudinal study: Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison asked

29,000 people to rate their level of stress over the past year as well as how much they believed this stress influenced their health

— a little, a moderate amount, or a lot.

Over the next eight years, public death records were used to record the passing of any subjects.

The findings:

People who reported having high levels of stress and who **believed stress had a large impact on their health had a whopping 43% increased risk of death.**

On the other hand, those that **experienced a lot of stress but did not perceive its effects as negative were amongst the least likely to die as compared to all other participants in the study.**

RESILIENCE TO STRESS through Exercise:

Research suggests that physical activity may be linked to lower physiological reactivity toward stress.

Those who get more exercise may become less affected by the stress they face.

It doesn't need to be a lot of time when it comes to exercise and reducing stress.



In experiments conducted by Robert Thayer, PhD, at California State University, a brisk 10-minute walk not only increased energy, but the effects lasted up to two hours. And when the daily 10-minute walks continued for three weeks, overall energy levels and mood were lifted.