

Relaxation Practices

This relaxation practice can be used before bed to aid sleep or at any time in the day to ease stress and reduce pain.

You may be inside or outside but the place should be comfortable, safe and warm.

- Recline (or lie down)
- Use a blanket as required
- Ensure your body is supported

The Practice

- Close your eyes and take two changing breaths. These are deep breaths in through the nose and sighing out on the 'out' breath.
- Scan down your whole body noticing any areas of discomfort. If you can relieve them by changing posture then do so. If not then simply acknowledge them to yourself.
- Focus on your breath. Observe the whole breath three times, sensing the cool air coming in, the expansion of the lungs, the rise of the chest and the exhalation of warmer air.
- Without changing or straining your breath, imagine that it is travelling all the way down to your toes and back up again. Let this ebb and flow develop into a steady rhythm which leads your body into deeper relaxation.
- Now bring your attention to your right foot. The heel, the arch, the toes and the top of the foot. On your next 'out' breath send a wave of relaxation to that area. Let it release.
- Take your attention to your whole right leg. Scan down from the hip to the thigh, knee, shin, calf and ankle. Breathe out a wave of relaxation to the whole leg.
- Repeat with the left foot and leg. Notice how your legs feel.
- Bring your focus to your body, the back, the chest, the belly. Notice if you are holding tension. Take a deep breath and sigh out into this area allowing your muscles to soften and your body to release still further.
- Take your mind to your arms. From the shoulder, down to the elbows, the forearms, the wrists, the hands and the fingers. On your next 'out' breath send a wave of relaxation down your arms all the way to the tips of your fingers. Have a sense of letting them go.
- Now bring your focus to your neck and head. Start at the back of the neck and travel over the head, the scalp, the forehead, the eyes, the nose, the mouth and tongue, the jaw. Allow the next 'out' breath to relax the whole head, slackening the jaw and smoothing the muscles around the eyes.
- Observe how your whole body feels.
- When you are ready to finish your session, take a changing breath and gently bring some movement back to your hands and feet, slowly open your eyes. Make sure that you feel steady and grounded.
- Have a drink of water.

The Relaxing Breath

Sit up with your back straight (eventually you will be able to do this in any position).

Put the tip of your tongue on the ridge behind your top front teeth; keep it there throughout the exercise.

To begin, exhale through the mouth, making a swoosh sound.

1. Close your mouth & inhale through your nose to the count of four
2. Hold your breath for seven
3. Exhale through your mouth making swoosh sound, to a count of eight
4. Repeat steps 1-3 four more times

Do this exercise at least twice daily. You may repeat it more often but don't do more than four breaths at a time.