

Stress Relief: Relaxation

Focusing the mind helps provide stress relief. Taking 5 to 10 minutes to practice relaxation each day helps you feel more refreshed. You can do these exercises almost anywhere. Try one or more until you find what works best for you.



Calm your mind

Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Then try the following:

- Sit comfortably. Take off your shoes. Turn off your cell phone. Take a few deep breaths.
- Focus your mind on one peaceful thought, image, or word. Then try to hold that thought for 5 minutes.
- When other thoughts enter your mind, relax and refocus. Let the invading thoughts fall away.
- When you're done, stand up slowly and stretch your arms over your head. With practice, this exercise can help you feel restored.

Calm your body

With practice, you can use mental cues to tell your body how to feel.

- Sit comfortably and clear your mind. A few deep breaths will help.
- Mentally focus on your left hand and repeat to yourself, "My left hand feels warm and heavy." Keep doing this until your hand does feel heavier and warmer.
- Repeat the exercise using your right hand. Then focus on your arms, legs, and feet until your whole body feels relaxed.
- When you're done, stand up slowly and stretch your arms overhead.

Visualization

Visualization is like taking a mental vacation. It frees your mind while keeping your body in a calm state. To get started, picture yourself feeling warm and relaxed. Choose a peaceful setting that appeals to you and then fill in the details. If you imagine a tropical beach, listen to the waves on the shore. Feel the sun on your face. Dig your toes in the sand. You can use this technique whenever you want to relax. By using the power of your mind, you can take a soothing break when you need to.

Other relaxing techniques include meditation, breathing exercises, yoga, and tai chi. You can learn about these and other healthy and relaxing activities on the [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health \(NCCIH\) website at www.nccih.nih.gov/health/relaxation-techniques-what-you-need-to-know](https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/relaxation-techniques-what-you-need-to-know) .

© 2000-2024 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions.