



WELLNESS WORKSHEET 14

Relaxation Techniques: Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Imagery

Relaxation techniques can counteract the effects of chronic stress and can be used in stressful situations to help bring the body back to normal levels of functioning. Choose one of the two relaxation techniques described here. Practice it every day until it becomes natural to you, and then use it whenever you feel the need. If, after you've given it a good try, one technique doesn't seem to work well, try the other (see Chapter 2 in your text for descriptions of additional techniques).

General Instructions

Both of the following techniques use scripts that you (or a friend or family member with a soothing voice) can record. Playing the tape back will help you learn the technique. It is best to record your tape in a quiet room, reading the script slowly and carefully. Use a warm and encouraging voice and include pauses between each sentence and paragraph of the script. Your final tape should be about 15–20 minutes long.

When you are ready to use your tape, remember that these techniques will work best if you are in a comfortable position (sitting or lying down) in a place where you won't be disturbed. Dim the light and loosen any tight clothing so you can breathe deeply and relax completely.

Script for Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Take a slow, deep breath . . . and relax. Relax. . . . Let your worries and thoughts drift away. Breathe slowly in . . . and out. . . . Relax.

Gently begin to pay attention to your *left foot*. . . . Feel your *left foot*. . . . Slowly tighten all the muscles in your *left foot* . . . and hold it . . . and relax them. Feel the tension melting away. . . . Feel your *foot* relaxed, and heavy, and warm. . . .

Breathe deeply in . . . and relax. . . .

Now begin to pay attention to your *right foot*. . . . Feel it. . . . Slowly tighten all the muscles in your *right foot* . . . and hold it . . . and relax them. Feel the tension melting away. . . . Feel your *foot* relaxed, and heavy, and warm. . . .

Breathe deeply in . . . and relax. . . .

(Continue following the pattern above, substituting different areas of your body for the italicized terms: left calf, right calf, left thigh, right thigh, hips and buttocks, stomach, chest, back, left arm and hand, right arm and hand, neck and shoulders, throat, jaw, eyes, forehead.)

Slowly scan your whole body, and if you feel any tension, relax . . . and let it go. . . . Now your whole body is relaxed . . . and at ease . . . and at peace. . . . Enjoy your quiet breathing. . . . Breathe in . . . and hold it . . . and breathe out. . . . Now your muscles are relaxed. . . . Your whole body is relaxed . . . and calm . . . and at peace. . . .

Enjoy this calm, peaceful sensation of deep relaxation . . . as you breathe in . . . and out . . . and in . . . and out. . . . Feel how soft and relaxed your muscles are. . . . Enjoy this calm sensation. . . . This is what it feels like when your body is relaxed . . . and at peace. . . . Whenever you feel tense, you can return to this refreshing, calm state of relaxation. . . .

Breathe deeply . . . and relax. . . . Your body feels refreshed and energized. . . . Take one more deep breath in . . . and relax. . . . You feel refreshed and ready . . . ready to bring this relaxed, energized feeling back with you into your everyday life. . . .

One more deep breath and you're ready. . . . Open your eyes gently, and stretch. . . . Take a deep breath.

(over)

Script for Imagery

Relax. . . Close your eyes. . . Let your worries and thoughts drift away. You are breathing slowly in . . . and out. . . Relax. . . You are going to use your ability to visualize . . . to daydream . . . to make pictures in your mind's eye. . . Let your worries and thoughts drift away. . . Your imaging will be clearest when your mind is free of thoughts and worries and concerns. . . If distracting thoughts or doubts about this process come into your mind, let them float away like small clouds in a blue sky. . .

Relax. . . You are breathing slowly in . . . and out. . . Relax. . . Imagine yourself someplace that you love . . . or where you'd like to be . . . somewhere outdoors that feels quiet and personal . . . a calm place, a quiet beach, or a wood, or a valley. . . Take a deep breath, imagine the beautiful clear air . . . and the warmth of sunlight . . . and a cool breeze. . .

Imagine yourself sitting down . . . and breathing deeply in . . . and out . . . so calm . . . and so peaceful. . . Perhaps you can hear birds . . . or waves lapping on the sand . . . or a river running nearby. . . Perhaps you can smell the flowers. . . Take another deep breath . . . and relax.

Look around you. . . What do you see? This beautiful place . . . the calm weather . . . trees, perhaps . . . their leaves moving in the breeze . . . or the waves gently breaking . . . a few small clouds . . . a flight of geese high overhead . . . the deep blue of the sky . . . the rich browns and wonderful fresh greens of the earth. . .

Imagine closing your eyes and just listening . . . feeling the peacefulness . . . the restfulness of the place. . . You can imagine yourself lying down in a comfortable position . . . and letting go of your worries and tensions . . . and relaxing. . . Imagine the warmth of the sun . . . and the cool breeze playing on your face . . . as you relax . . . and breathe quietly in . . . and out. . .

Listen to the quiet sounds around you. . . Feel the sun on your skin, warming you, soothing away all tensions and cares. . . Feel the breeze playing on your skin. . . This place is so restful, so full of peace. . . Let the faint smells and sounds of this marvelous place gently relax you. . .

And breathe in . . . and out. . . You can hear water in the distance. . . The weather is just perfect . . . as you relax . . . and breathe in . . . and out. . . Your mind is still. . . If you have any last thoughts or worries, watch them float away like small clouds in a calm, blue sky. . . You are at peace. . . You are completely at peace. . .

Relax and enjoy the sunlight and the breeze. . . Relax. . . Breathe gently and deeply . . . and relax. . . Your body is rested and at peace. . . You are drawing strength and energy from the sunlight. . . As you breathe in, the energy fills you. . . Your lungs are filled with oxygen . . . nourishing and healing energy . . . and peace. . . Your body feels refreshed and energized. . .

Take one more deep breath in . . . and relax. . . You feel refreshed and ready . . . ready to bring this relaxed, energized feeling back with you into your everyday life. . . One more deep breath . . . and you're ready. . . Open your eyes gently, and stretch. . . Take a deep breath. . .

Your Responses

Describe the technique you tried and how you felt before and after: