

Relaxation Exercise

This exercise is most effective when done for at least ten minutes twice a day. It will reduce stress levels by up to ten percent if done as recommended.

The exercise is cumulative in effect. Even doing a few minutes here and there adds up. Doing more than recommended above is beneficial as long as it doesn't become excessive. This is not a remedy to be applied when you are already very stressed. It is best done regularly as a means of reducing overall stress levels.

It is not recommended that you use this exercise to go to sleep. The paths of relaxation and sleep should be kept quite separate. If you feel you may fall asleep you can do the exercise sitting up. It is important that you experience the feelings of being relaxed by remaining conscious and awake.

Sit or lie comfortably and close your eyes. Let your jaw drop to a comfortable position.

Breathe comfortably. Your breaths don't have to be deep, just whatever is comfortable for you.

Concentrate your attention or focus on your solar plexus, just above your waist. This will help you avoid concentrating too much on your breathing and disturbing its pattern.

When your breathing is comfortable, you may stop concentrating on the solar plexus. Add a single word to the process. The word is to be said in your mind each time you exhale. The word may be 'calm', 'relax', 'peace' or 'one' or anything that suits you. One syllable words work best for most people. It is important to use the same word every time you do the exercise.

When this becomes comfortable, add a mental picture to the exercise. You may choose any rhythmic, repetitive picture. Examples are a wave coming up the beach, then breaking and running back out or a light curtain floating to and fro in the breeze. See the picture in your mind in time with your breathing in and out. It is important to use the same picture every time you do the exercise.

Maintain the breathing, word and visualisation for as long as you choose.

When you are ready, wiggle your toes and fingers and slowly open your eyes.

Enjoy the feeling of ease and relaxation the exercise gives you and look forward to the next time.

The breathing relaxes the body, the word relaxes the conscious thinking of your brain and the picture relaxes the 'old brain', the seat of your instinctive responses.