



Live Well Now

Psychology & Health Solutions

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Relaxation

Learning to relax is my number one recommendation for coping with stress, anxiety and depression. The physical, emotional and mental benefits of relaxation have been well studied and documented. Some of these include:

- ❖ Slows heart rate
- ❖ Reduces blood pressure
- ❖ Increases blood flow to the muscles
- ❖ Lowers cortisol levels
- ❖ Improves sleep
- ❖ Strengthens immune system
- ❖ Reduces pain
- ❖ Improves sense of well-being
- ❖ Improves mental focus and problem solving
- ❖ Enhances concentration and attention
- ❖ Assists to regulate emotions
- ❖ Increases energy
- ❖ Enhances coping skills
- ❖ Improves stress management

Relaxation can take many forms and can include things like walking, reading, lying on the ground in the sun or watching the clouds. Many people find that spending time outdoors appreciating natural beauty helps them relax and feel more at peace. Finding a special place for reflection in nature, such as bush walking or visiting national parks, waterfalls or beaches that you visit regularly can further enhance your sense of well-being. Making time for connecting with nature has become even more essential in our busy modern lives where we sit in offices, classrooms or in front of computers and televisions. More structured forms of relaxation include progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, meditation and yoga. These forms of relaxation take regular practice to master but have many benefits.

I would encourage you to practice regular relaxation incorporating some natural relaxation into your week, combined with daily practice of yoga, meditation or progressive muscle relaxation.

Deep Breathing

An important skill to have when doing any kind of relaxation is natural and deep breathing. By this I mean breathing into your abdomen, allowing oxygen to reach your lower lungs. Without sufficient air in your lungs your blood is not properly oxygenated or purified. Poorly oxygenated blood can

result in anxiety, depression, fatigue, reduced coping mechanisms and many physical problems. Proper breathing is essential to mental and physical health.

The best way to learn to breathe correctly is to lie on the floor and place your hands on the area that seems to rise and fall the most as you breathe. If this is your chest then move your hands to your abdomen and focus your breath to that area. Let both your chest and abdomen rise and fall naturally with each breath. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Allow a small sigh or whoosh to escape as you exhale.

Relaxation Audio Track

To download my relaxation audio track visit <http://livewellnow.com.au/client-resources> and click the download link, or simply scan the code below on your mobile phone (this is a 24MB download) and it will download automatically to your phone.



The audio track will guide you through various relaxation techniques including deep breathing, counting your breath, progressive muscle relaxation, body awareness, developing a special place in your mind, coping imagery, positive affirmation and anchoring relaxation to a body movement. Before starting the relaxation, think of a positive statement or affirmation that you would like to use while listening. For example, “I am at peace”, “I am strong”, “I am in control of my thoughts”, “I can manage my stress”, or any other area of your life you would like to strengthen or change. Then ensure you are in a comfortable position either sitting in a chair with both feet flat on the floor and arms resting loosely on your legs, or lying on your back on a bed or the floor with legs flat and arms beside you. Make sure you are in a quiet place and will be undisturbed for the duration of the recording. If you have limited time stop the recording at the completion of the progressive muscle relaxation and before the start of the body scan.

Once you have mastered the skill of deep breathing and relaxation you will be able to access a state of relaxation very quickly using the anchoring technique outlined in the recording. Daily practice of this technique will ensure maximum benefit to your physical and mental health.

Recommended Reading

The Relaxation and Stress reduction Workbook by M. Davis, E. Eshelman and M. McKay