

Relaxation Secrets

By Marga Young

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In our modern day and age, stress has reached an all-time high level. In order to combat stress, many people try to find solace in drinking, smoking or using drugs. However, all these measures only work counteractive. Because you feel slightly more relaxed than before, you think that it actually works. But the opposite is true. These substances change our brain chemistry and make us addicted. In fact, we become more stressed and need to have our fix in order to feel slightly more relaxed again.

There are many ways to relax easily with a minimum of time and effort. A very well known method is the muscle-relaxation method. This is something you can do just about anywhere at any time, but the best way to learn is to sit in a comfortable chair and do the following:

1. Breathe in deeply through your nose. Feel your tummy fill up. Hold it ... and breathe out slowly. Hold it and breathe in again. Try to count to 8 when you breathe in and when you breathe out. Do this for about 1 minute until you feel a bit more relaxed.
2. Keep on breathing in this fashion. Now tense all the muscles in your left leg when you breathe in. Hold it ... and relax all these muscles when you breathe out. Hold it ... and breathe in again but this time only THINK about how it felt to tense all the muscles in your left leg. Hold it ... and breathe out and relax all the muscles in your left leg completely. Feel your leg get very heavy.
3. Do the same with the right leg, the left arm, the right arm, your torso and your head.
4. Finally, you tense all the muscles in your entire body from top to toe when you breathe in. Hold it again and let go when you breathe out. Do this one more time in though and feel your whole body go very heavy and relaxed.

This exercise will help you to feel more relaxed and be better able to deal with stress and depression.

Another way of dealing with relaxation which takes a bit more work is meditation. It takes a little while to get the hang of it and get the benefits but it is well worth the effort. Most forms of meditation have to do with concentration. They teach you to concentrate on a candle or other object or a mantra. However, the form I would recommend teaches you to concentrate on the breath. Here are the steps:

1. Sit in a comfortable position. Most Western people cannot sit in lotus position so do not

worry about this. A comfortable chair with a straight back is just fine.

2. Close your eyes and breath through your nose. This is not an exercise to regulate your breathing so just observe it when you breath naturally.
3. While breathing naturally, which can be hard, soft, fast, slow or anything else, try to feel the touch of your breath inside your nostrils. Feel the cold air inside your nostrils go in and the warmer air go out.
4. In the beginning you will find that your thoughts go all over the place. One minute you are observing your breath, the next you are thinking about your shopping, the argument you had, what you want to say to another person, etc. Do not get upset by this, it is normal. When you notice that your thoughts have wandered off, just bring it back to your breath. It will take a long time before you can keep your concentration on your breath for some time, but in the mean time you will slowly start to notice that you get more relaxed.
5. A next step could be to go on to a more difficult form of meditation called Vipassana meditation. Look at <http://vipassana.allnaturalworld.biz/vipassana-meditation.html> for more information.

I personally found meditation a very rewarding practise and it has changed my life. I am very relaxed now and only get the occasional bouts of stress.

There are also many other methods, products and tapes on the market. Relaxation can also be very rewarding in other fields. Lucid dreaming for instance can only be done when you are very relaxed. Although courses and products are not sold with relaxation in mind, they certainly have this very pleasant "side effect".

Just remember that you do not have to be stressed out. Relaxation, like anything else, is a choice. We can at any time in our lives choose to take another job, leave our spouse or anything else that gives us stress. You can either take more time for yourself and learn to relax or change your life. All that is keeping you from doing this is just fear

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