

Chapter Six: Relax to Breathe More Easily

How many times have you said to yourself, "I wish I could RELAX!" Well maybe now you can...

The following step-by-step process helps relax all the major tension areas of your body. You may want to make a tape recording of this guide, allowing sufficient time to complete each step. Then you can just listen to the tape while you relax. Your spouse or a friend could also recite the guide to you in a soothing voice as you practice. Another suggestion is to use your favorite music to help you relax. Put on a recording that brings back fond memories or one that you find particularly soothing.

Once this technique of RELAXATION becomes part of your everyday life, you may find you have a different perspective on what's going on around you. In addition it should also help you BREATHE BETTER. It can generally be done anytime and anywhere you can find a few moments of peace and quiet.

Relaxation Guide

- Go to a quiet place. Get into a comfortable position with your arms and legs supported.
- Close your eyes.
- Concentrate on your breathing. Take a deep breath through your nose and exhale slowly through pursed lips. Each time you exhale, imagine yourself breathing out tension as you think RELAX.
- Begin counting slowly to 10. One-two-three-four-five...take a deep breath and exhale...six-seven-eight-nine-ten.
- Now, take another deep breath. Exhale slowly and think RELAX.
- Learn to recognize tension. Make a fist and squeeze your hand tightly. Slowly open your fingers and feel the tension leave. Your hand should feel lighter and relaxed.
- Take a deep breath – exhale slowly through pursed lips – think RELAX.
- Now you can relieve tension all over your body simply by contracting and relaxing each set of muscles.
- Begin with your head and neck and progress to other body parts.
- Take a deep breath – exhale slowly through pursed lips – think RELAX.
- Wrinkle your forehead and clench your teeth. Now release these muscles and feel the tension flow from your head. Your face is now relaxed.
- Take a deep breath – exhale slowly through pursed lips – think RELAX.
- Now slowly raise your shoulders as high as you can. Feel the muscles tighten in your back and neck. Gently lower your shoulders and feel the muscles relax.
- Think about the muscles in your upper arms. Allow them to relax. Think about the muscles in your lower arms and wrists and allow them to relax. Tighten both fists – open them up slowly – think RELAX. Your arms are now relaxed.
- Think about the weight and heaviness in your chest. Imagine someone lifting off this weight so that you can breathe easier.
- Take a deep breath – exhale slowly. Allow the tension to leave your chest.
- If the heaviness is not completely gone, do not be concerned. With practice you will be able to lift off more of the weight each time.

- Take a deep breath – exhale slowly – think RELAX. With every breath you exhale more tension.
- The muscles along your back are pulled and tight. Imagine someone massaging these tense muscles along your spine with firm but gentle fingers.
- Feel the tension in your hips and allow them to sink into your bed or chair. Tighten your legs for an instant, and then let them relax. Feel the warmth going from hips to your thighs to your knees to your ankles to your toes, taking with it all the tension in your legs. Your legs are now relaxed.
- Take a deep breath and exhale slowly. Think RELAX. Each time you exhale, try to relax a little more.
- You should now be completely relaxed from head to toe. Take this time to imagine a relaxing scene.

For example:

You are at the ocean. The day is warm but there is a cool breeze blowing gently against your hair and skin. Hear the waves break against the shore. Here the soft cry of the seagulls in the distance. See the sunlight sparkle on the water's surface. Gaze at the changing blues and greens of the ocean as the waves repeatedly meet the shore. Hear the fizzing sound made by each wave as it spreads out over the sand and retreats back to

the ocean. Sniff and taste the salty air. Feel the spray against your face. Smell this combination of sea, salt, sand, and sunshine. It is a beautiful day. You are happy and are in control. [PAUSE]

- Take a deep breath – exhale slowly through pursed lips – think RELAX. Now slowly count backwards from 10. Ten-nine-eight-seven-six...you are relaxed...five-four-three-two-one. You should feel relaxed and refreshed.

Shoulder Shrugging

- Stand or sit with your feet apart and your arms relaxed.
- Shrug your shoulders and tighten the muscles as much as possible.
- Relax and rest.
- Repeat.

Elbow Circling

- Sitting comfortably, place your hands on your shoulders.
- Circle your elbows forward four times and backward four times.
- Relax.

Head Circling

- Roll your head loosely from side to side in a forward semi-circle.
- Don't roll your head back.
- Relax.