

DEEP BREATHING & PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple but very effective method of relaxation. It is a core component of everything from the "take ten deep breaths" approach for calming down, right through to yoga relaxation and meditation. It works well in conjunction with other relaxation techniques such as Progressive Muscular Relaxation, relaxation imagery and meditation to reduce stress.

To use the technique, take a number of deep breaths through your diaphragm (your stomach should rise when breathing in and fall when breathing out...not your shoulders!) and refer to the explanation below.

Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR)

Progressive Muscular Relaxation is useful for relaxing your body when your muscles are tense.

The idea behind PMR is that you tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tightly contracted as possible. Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds. Then, relax the muscles to their previous state. Finally, consciously relax the muscles even further so that you are as relaxed as possible. By tensing your muscles first, you will probably find that you are able to relax your muscles more than would be the case if you tried to relax your muscles directly. Experiment with PMR by forming a fist, and clenching your hand as tight as you can for a few seconds. Then relax your hand to its previous tension, and then consciously relax it again so that it is as loose as possible. You should feel deep relaxation in your hand muscles.

For maximum relaxation you can use PMR in conjunction with breathing techniques and imagery.

The "Relaxation Response"

A series of experiments into various popular meditation techniques established that these techniques had a very real effect on reducing stress and controlling the fight-or-flight response. Direct effects included deep relaxation, slowed heartbeat and breathing, reduced oxygen consumption and increased skin resistance.

This is something that you can do for yourself by following these steps:

- Sit quietly and comfortably ideally in a reclined position.
- Close your eyes, but don't fall asleep!
- Start by relaxing the muscles of your feet and work up your body relaxing muscles.
- Focus your attention on your breathing (Breathe in 6 secs, hold .5 secs, breath out 4 secs and repeat).
- Breathe in deeply and then let your breath out. Count your breaths, and say the number of the breath as you let it out (this gives you something to do with your mind, helping you to avoid distraction).

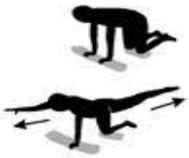
Do this for ten minutes 2 times per day or twenty minutes to start with.

Again, you can prove to yourself that this works using biofeedback equipment.

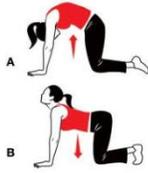
HOME EXERCISE INSTRUCTIONS

SPINAL MOBILITY EXERCISES

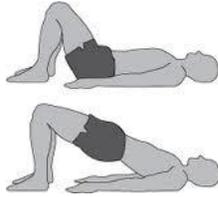
NOTES:



Bird Dog



Cat/Camel



Hip Bridge

NECK EXERCISES



Flexion



Extension



Hyper-extension



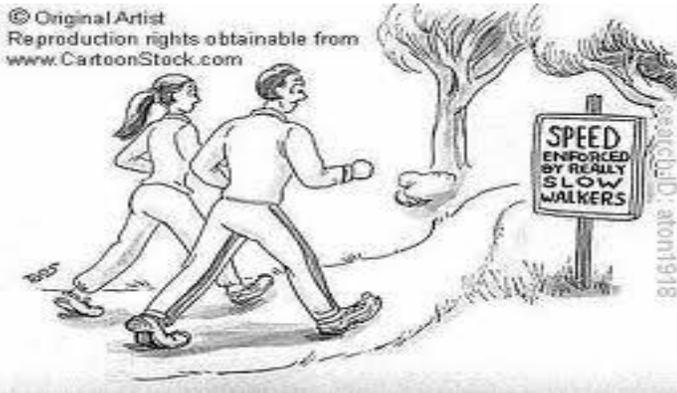
Rotation



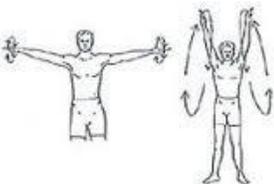
Lateral flexion

WALKING

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SHOULDER EXERCISES



Forward/Reverse/Big/Small