

# Daily Stress Buster

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This relaxation technique reduces pulse rate and blood pressure as well as decreasing perspiration and respiration rates. Deep muscle relaxation can be used as an anti-anxiety pill. Muscle relaxation reduces tension and is incompatible with anxiety.

This technique involves tensing individual muscle groups for several seconds and releasing tension.

1. Tense your facial muscles by clenching your teeth and furrowing your brow. Hold the tension for 5 to 10 seconds and then release.
2. Next, tense your shoulder muscles by shrugging them and tucking in your chin. Hold the tension for 5 to 10 seconds, then release.
3. Next tense your arm muscles by making fists. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds and release.
4. Continue to tighten and release each group of muscles in your body all the way to your toes.
5. Picture the tension evaporating as you release each muscle. Focus on the warmth and heaviness of the body parts as they relax.

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## Deep Breathing

Proper breathing is essential for good mental and physical health. When our bodies are fully relaxed, like when sleeping, our breathing takes less effort and is more efficient. By following the steps below we can recreate this more relaxed type of breathing during stressful situations to alleviate some anxiety.

For this technique it is ideal to be lying flat on your back, however, since this is not usually an option, find a comfortable sitting position.

1. As you slowly count to 4, gently inhale.
2. Imagine warmth flowing into your lungs and to all parts of your body.
3. Pause for one second.
4. As you slowly count to 4, gently exhale.
5. Pause for another second
6. Repeat this process 5-10 times.

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## Relaxation Response

Recognizing that some people who practice meditation are capable of reducing their heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen consumption, a Harvard doctor set out several decades ago to understand how they do it. He developed a simple practice that focuses on the qualities in meditation that

Every day, if possible, plan to spend some time to rest, not sleep. For this technique, find somewhere quiet and comfortable to sit.

1. Close your eyes and relax your muscles, if desired, use the progressive muscle relaxation exercise from Monday.
2. Focus on breathing regularly.
3. Continuously repeat one word, either aloud or in your mind. It should be a simple word, such as 'relax' or 'easy', a religious word or phrase.
4. Continue regular breathing with your muscles relaxed.

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## Visualization

When you think anxious thoughts, you become tense. In order to overcome negative feelings, you can use the power of your imagination to refocus your mind on positive, healing images. Visualizing is a good way to remove yourself mentally from a stressful situation.

For this technique get into a comfortable position, either sitting or lying, and close your eyes.

1. Practice the progressive muscle relaxation exercise from Monday.
2. Allow thoughts to pass through your mind without actually 'thinking' about them.
3. Imagine you are somewhere that makes you feel good; the beach, forest, or any place that you perceive as relaxing.
4. Breathe slowly and deeply until you feel relaxed.
5. Focus on all five senses. Imagine what you see, feel, hear, taste and smell.
6. Continue to visualize yourself in this place for 5-10 minutes.
7. Gradually return your focus to the room you are in and end the visualization exercise.

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## 15 Helpful Hints for Reducing Stress

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation
2. Deep Breathing
3. Visualization
4. Relaxation Response
5. Active Exercise
6. Healthy Diet
7. Avoid caffeine and nicotine
8. Have escape routes allowing relaxation, like reading, long baths or dining out
9. Have a sense of humor
10. Learn to say NO!
11. Talk about worries
12. Pamper yourself
13. Think positive, the glass is always half full!
14. Create a budget and stick to it
15. Prioritize your time and work