

Auto-Suggestion

Giving yourself commands to relax is called Auto-Suggestion. Teach yourself to feel heaviness or warmth in your arms and legs and notice the soothing effect. Try the exercises on the next page to reduce tension headaches or just enjoy the relaxing effect.

Guidelines and Suggestions

1. Choose one of two postures:
 - A. Sitting down with head, legs, and arms well supported (armchair)
 - B. Reclining with head raised, arms at sides
2. Reduce distractions. Use a quiet room with moderate temperature and dim lights. Wear loose clothes, keep your eyes closed.
3. Check body for muscle tension.
4. Take a “let it happen” attitude. Be aware of what is going on and stay alert to your feelings.
5. Recognize body distractions. These are temporary sensations some people feel. Some people report a tingling sensation or some involuntary movements or stiffness. Continue your commands as normal.
6. Use your own mental pictures to enhance the exercise. In the heaviness exercise, imagine small lead weights gently pulling you down, a heaviness from the shoulders to the fingertips. In the warmth exercise, imagine your arms lying on a warm heating pad or soaking in warm bath water. Some people enjoy thinking of warming sunlight or holding a warm mug of their favorite hot drink.
7. Concentrate strongly on developing the sensations. Don't expect perfection right away.
8. Devote a couple of minutes each day, three times a week, when first practicing this exercise. Gradually increase the time you spend doing it.

*...enjoy
thinking of
warming
sunlight*

Introduction

This chapter presents a multiple treatment approach to relaxation training. It begins with an explanation of how each individual can systematically learn how to bridge the mind and body through their own efforts. Then the chapter will offer a variety of relaxation techniques and concepts. Some techniques may be better suited for you than others. You will choose to put into your schedule those techniques that you are good at and enjoy the most.

Like any new behavior, learning to relax in a healthy manner takes practice. It is not enough to only read about relaxation techniques. They must be practiced. Commit to using relaxation tools throughout your day.

Relaxation Techniques

- Help the body to relax when under stress. This minimizes the physical wear and tear from stress.
- Help the mind to relax. Where the mind goes, the body follows.
- Help people learn to recognize body tension and work to reduce it. The more these techniques are practiced, the easier they become.
- Help people to become more stress resistant. The more practice, the more relaxed your natural state will become.