

Relaxation

There are techniques that can help one relax when he/she is feeling stressed. Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that involves contracting, then relaxing the muscle groups in the body in succession. Relaxation exercises should be done in a quiet, well-ventilated room and should encompass all muscle groups in the body. To do this, start to do deep breathing. As you inhale, tense the muscles in your feet and hold the tension for at least five seconds and then relax. Repeat this exercise for each part of the body, starting with the feet, then moving up to the thighs, buttocks, abdominal muscles, stomach, arms, shoulders, and head. For each exercise the contraction should be held for about five seconds. The entire sequence will probably take at least 20 minutes. If time is a factor and you cannot complete the whole sequence, you can do the exercises specific to the area that feels the most tense.

Breathing exercises can also be an antidote to stress. In these exercises, the person concentrates on breathing away the tension and inhaling fresh air to the body. The three type of breathing exercises are deep breathing, sighing, and complete natural breathing. For deep breathing, start out lying flat on the floor with a pillow placed underneath your knees, feet slightly separated, with your toes pointed outward. The next step is to place one hand on the abdomen and the other hand on the chest. Breathe in and out slowly so the hand on the abdomen rises when you inhale and falls as you exhale. Repeat the exercise about 10 times and compare the tension felt at the beginning of the exercise to the tension at the end. Another breathing exercise is sighing. Using the abdominal breathing technique, breathe in through your nose to a specific count (e.g., 4, 5, or 6) and then exhale through pursed lips to double the intake count (e.g., 8, 10, or 12). Then repeat the exercise eight to ten times whenever you feel tense. The last breathing technique is complete natural breathing. To do this, sit in an upright position or stand straight up. Breathing through your nose, fill your lungs gradually from the bottom up, holding your breath for several seconds. The next step is to exhale slowly by allowing your chest and abdomen to relax completely.