

# STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLS

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## Steps Required to Elicit the Relaxation Response:

- Step 1: Pick a focus word or short phrase that's firmly rooted in your belief system; for example the word "Peace."
- Step 2: Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
- Step 3: Close your eyes.
- Step 4: Relax your muscles.
- Step 5: Breathe slowly and naturally and, as you do, repeat your focus word or phrase as you exhale.
- Step 6: Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, "oh, well" and gently return to the repetition.
- Step 7: Continue for ten to twenty minutes.
- Step 8: Practice the technique once or twice daily.

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### Slow, Deep Breathing Practice:

- Step 1: Either lying down or sitting quietly, place your hands on your stomach.
- Step 2: Take a deep breath in through your nose; your stomach should expand (rise). Count to ten while breathing in.
- Step 3: Pause.
- Step 4: Exhale nosily through your mouth.
- Step 5: Exhalation should be half as long as inhalation. Count to five while exhaling.
- Step 6: Each time you exhale try to release tension and stress.
- Step 7: You may wish to think about breathing in energy, hope and peace and breathing out what is old, tired and negative.
- Step 8: Deep breathing can be practiced throughout your day – at a stop light, when on the phone and you are placed “on hold,” waiting in line, or when you get into bed at night.

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## Body Scan Exercise

- Step 1: Lie on your back in a comfortable place.
- Step 2: Allow your eyes to gently close.
- Step 3: Feel the rising and falling of your belly with each in breath and out breath.
- Step 4: Take a few moments to feel your body as a “whole” from head to toe; notice the parts coming in contact with the floor or the bed.
- Step 5: Bring your attention to the toes of the left foot. Try to channel or direct your breathing to your toes as well.
- Step 6: Allow yourself to feel any and all sensations from your toes; you may not feel anything and that is okay. Just keep focused on your toes and breathe in and out through them as best you can.
- Step 7: When you are ready to leave the toes and move on, take a deeper breath in and out through the toes and allow them to dissolve in you minds eye. Just continue watching your breath and when you are ready to move on, draw your attention to the sole of your foot, the heel, the top of the foot, and then the ankle, continuing to breathe in to and out from each region as you observe the sensations that your are experiencing. The, let go of it and move on.
- Step 8: Bring your mind back to your breath any time you notice that your attention has wandered off.
- Step 9: In this way, continue to slowly move up your left leg and then move on to your right foot and leg and on to the rest of your body. Maintain your focus on the breath and on the feeling of the body regions as you come to them. Breathe with each body region and the let go of them.
- Step 10: The body scan practice may take twenty to forty minutes. You may wish to keep your eyes open if you have difficulty staying awake.

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## Guided Imagery Practice: Going to a special place

- Step 1: Allow yourself to sit back and relax. Loosen any clothing that feels tight. Remove your glasses if you wish. Place your arms and legs in a comfortable position. Gently close your eyes.
- Step 2: Allow your attention to move to your breathing. Let your breathing become even and comfortable.
- Step 3: Now, call to mind a special place. It could be a real place, a place you may actually have been; a beautiful spot in nature or a comforting place in your own home. Your special place may be an imaginary place, indoors or outdoors, it doesn't matter. Should more than one place come to mind, allow yourself to stay with one of them.
- Step 4: The only thing that matters is that you are in a place in which you are completely comfortable and safe. Appreciate this scene with all of your senses. Smell the aromas, feel the air as it caresses your skin, experience the ground securely under you, and touch and feel the whole environment that you are in.
- Step 5: Notice what you are wearing. Notice what you have on your feet; what time of year it is; the time of day; how old you are. Notice whether you are alone or with another person or people. Notice the color that surrounds you. What is the temperature? Is it warm? Is it cold? Notice the qualities of the place that make it safe and comfortable.
- Step 6: Look around you to see if there is anything else that would make this place more safe for you; perhaps something that you need to remove from the place; or, something you need to bring in. Then, notice how your body feels in the place. Now, take some time to enjoy this feeling of safety in your special place.
- Step 7: Thank yourself for taking this time for yourself; perhaps, promising yourself, and reassuring yourself that you will visit this place or some other place on your own, whenever you need to.
- Step 8: When you are ready, at your own pace, let your breathing deepen. Gradually let the awareness of your body against the chair return. Bring yourself back slowly and comfortably. When you are ready, gently open your eyes with a smile on your face.

Davis, M., Eshelman E., McKay M., "The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook 4<sup>th</sup> ed."  
New Harbinger Publications, 1995

Goleman D. and Gurin J., "Mind Body Medicine." Consumer Reports Books, 1999