GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SELF-RELAXATION PRACTICE

Although self relaxation/meditation is sometime used within a spiritual/religious context, this practice can also be secular in nature depending upon the intent of the individual.

- Choose a time in which you will have approximately 15 to 20 minutes to relax.
- Decrease external distractions (e.g., turn-down the lights, unplug the phone).
- Remember that any external concerns will be waiting for you after your relaxation, and that you can more effectively deal with concerns when you are more calm and settled.
- Maintain a good sitting posture with a straight back and feet planted firmly on the floor.
- Begin by focusing your awareness on deep, regular, “belly-breathing” (i.e., as you inhale, your stomach expands, as you exhale, your stomach recedes); this promotes general physical/mental relaxation.
- Select relaxation methods that seem to work best for you. Some examples include:
  1) Focus your conscious awareness on your in breath and out breath.
  2) Listen to some type of soothing music of your choosing.
  3) Select a word that has a positive association for you and silently repeat this word in your mind as you relax. Examples of words people use to focus their attention are “calm”, “relax”, “peace”, etc.
  4) Use your imagination to visualize a place that is very serene and tranquil.
- Realize that it is very common that your thoughts will wander (to past concerns or future planning) during relaxation. Simply bring your attention back to your present relaxation as often as necessary.
- Avoid trying too hard to relax or being critical of yourself that you are “not doing it right”. In general, an attitude of “gentle discipline” is recommended as you make relaxation a part of your daily routine.

Benefits of Relaxation/Meditation

A review of the literature (covering 25 years and 500 scientific studies from 210 different universities) suggests that meditation reduced stress, increased creativity, improved memory, increased energy, increased inner calm, reduced insomnia, reduced anxiety, improved interpersonal relations, improved breathing, and promoted younger biological age (Roth, 1994).
RELAXATION EXERCISE WORKSHEET

As we experiment with different relaxation techniques in this workshop, please use the following scale to provide a subjective estimate of your relaxation level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolute Calm</td>
<td>Moderate levels of tension</td>
<td>Maximum Anxiety</td>
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1) Guided visualization

Pre-relaxation resting pulse_____  Pre-relaxation estimate of relaxation level_____
Post-relaxation resting pulse_____  Post-relaxation estimate of relaxation level_____

Comments to self (e.g., other physical reactions, what was effective, what was not effective, how could it be better?):

2) Muscle relaxation

Pre-relaxation resting pulse_____  Pre-relaxation estimate of relaxation level_____
Post-relaxation resting pulse_____  Post-relaxation estimate of relaxation level_____

Comments to self:

3) Conscious Deep Breathing

Pre-relaxation resting pulse_____  Pre-relaxation estimate of relaxation level_____
Post-relaxation resting pulse_____  Post-relaxation estimate of relaxation level_____

Comments to self:

VISIT THE LONGVIEW RELAXATION CENTER IN CC245