

Relaxation Exercises to help with Anxious Moments

This information is intended to help you manage stress and anxiety.

The most effective way of managing stress and anxiety is to make time for yourself and practice calming exercises regularly. Stress itself can be a positive emotion that gets us motivated and forward thinking. However, when it gets out of control for any reason, we forget what it is like to feel calm and relaxed.

Here are some relaxation exercises you may like to practice.

Breathing to become calm

Your brain usually controls your breathing without you thinking about it. If you become anxious, your breathing can become shallow, uneven and faster. Quiet breathing techniques can help to calm the body and mind. With practice, these techniques can help you control your breathing during anxious moments, so you feel more relaxed.

- Start by sitting quietly. Breathe in and out through your nose and be aware of your breath on or just above your top lip. Allow your breath to slow down to a comfortable and quiet rate.
- As you settle, counting your breaths can be helpful:
 - Breathe in for a count of four if you can
 - Pause a moment
 - Breathe out for a count of five
 - Pause a moment.
- Continue as above, lengthening the count (if it feels comfortable) to slow down your breathing. Your breath should be gentle, not heavy.

There are many times when this type of breathing can help, for example when you are afraid, feel anxious or cannot sleep.

Breathing for relaxation

- Lie down flat with a pillow under your head. Gently place the palms of your hands on your diaphragm as illustrated.
- Breathe steadily, feeling the movement of your body against your hands as you breathe.

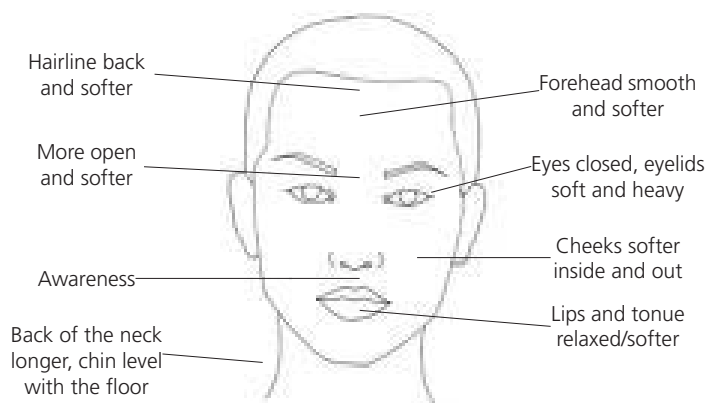


- Allow yourself to feel at ease and able to relax. Continue to breathe slowly and easily for as long as is comfortable. Next try diaphragm breathing without your hands so you can use this method in public settings if you like.
- In order to relax a part of your body, simply think about it and then say "Relax" softly in your mind.

You may want to try this to help you sleep.

Relaxing your face

- If you wear spectacles, you may wish to remove them.
- Start by sitting quietly. Focus on the area between your eyebrows. Gradually allow yourself to become aware of your whole face.
- Be aware of your face becoming softer and freer. Breathe easily and quietly as you allow your face to relax.
- Allow your eyes to focus softly and feel and hear your breath going in and out of your nostrils.



As your face relaxes, be aware of your breath. Notice the sensations of breathing, the cool air coming in and the warm air going out of the nostrils.

Your response to relaxation brings its own rewards. Aim to feel calmer and cultivate this feeling each day.