



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

The following are breathing exercises to relax the body and mind, and can be done in your office or at home.

The Relaxing Sigh

Do you notice yourself sighing or yawning during the day? This is usually a sign you are not breathing deeply enough to get enough oxygen. The sigh or yawn helps to remedy the situation and also releases tension. When you feel the need to relax, sit or stand up straight. Sigh deeply, letting out a sound of deep relief as the air rushes out of your lungs. Then let the air return to your lungs slowly and naturally. Repeat up to twelve times whenever you feel tense or anxious.

Complete Natural Breathing

This way of breathing will become second nature as you practice it. Sit or stand up straight. Breathe through your nose. While inhaling, fill the lower section of your lungs (your diaphragm will push your abdomen to make more room for the air). Now fill the middle part of your lungs with air as your lower ribs and your chest move forward slightly. Then fill the upper part of your lungs with air as you raise your chest slightly and draw in your abdomen a little. With practice, these steps can be performed in one continuous, smooth inhalation in a few seconds. Hold your breath for a few seconds. Exhale slowly, pulling your abdomen in slightly and lifting it up slowly as your lungs empty. When you have exhaled completely, relax your abdomen and chest. Repeat this sequence at least five times, rising your shoulders and collarbone occasionally after the inhalation to be sure that the very top of your lungs is filled with fresh air.

Purifying Breath

This exercise cleans your lungs while stimulating and toning your entire breathing process and refreshing your body. It can be used with other breathing exercises. Sit or stand up straight. Inhale a complete natural breath, as described in the previous exercise. Hold this breath for several seconds. Stop exhaling for a moment, then blow out more air. Repeat this procedure until you have exhaled the air. Practice for several minutes.

Tap Away Tension

This is a good exercise to relax you quickly while making you feel more alert. Stand up straight with your hands at your sides. As you inhale slowly, lightly tap your chest with your fingertips, moving your hand around so that your entire chest is tapped. When you have inhaled as much air as feels comfortable, hold your breath and pat your chest with your palms. Exhale using the purifying breath described in the previous exercise. Practice a few more purifying breaths and then repeat the tap-away tension exercise as many times as it feels comfortable. After you have repeated this exercise several times, try tapping the areas of your back that you can reach with your hands.

The Bracer

This is a good exercise when your energy is low. It will stimulate your breathing, circulation, and nervous system. Stand up straight with your hands at your sides. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath as described above. Raise your arms straight out in front of you, using just enough energy to keep them up and relaxed. Gradually bring your hands to your shoulders while contracting your hands into fists, so that when they reach your shoulders they are clenched as tight as you can make them. Keep your fists clenched as you push your arms out straight very slowly. Pull your arms back to your shoulders and straighten them out, fists tense, as fast as you can several times. Release your fists and let your arms drop to your sides, exhaling forcefully through your mouth. Practice a few purifying breaths as described previously. Repeat this exercise several times until you feel its purifying effects.

The Windmill

This is a good exercise to revive you when you feel overworked and tense. Stand up straight with your arms in front of you. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath as described previously. Swing your arms backward in a circle several times and then reverse directions. You may also try rotating them like a windmill. Exhale forcefully through your mouth. Practice several purifying breaths as described earlier. Repeat the exercise several times.

Bending

This is another exercise that will relieve tension when you have been working hard. It will also stretch your torso and make it more flexible. Stand straight with your hands on your hips. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath as described before. Let the lower part of your body remain stiff, bow forward as far as you possibly can while exhaling slowly through your mouth. Stand up straight again, inhale, and hold another complete natural breath. Bend backwards while slowly exhaling. Stand straight up again and hold another complete breath. Repeat this exercise, bending to the left and right. After each round of four bends, practice one purifying breath. Do all four rounds.

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