

# RELAXATION

ADOLESCENTS and adults (beginning age 12)

## Deep Breathing Exercises

- Ask adolescent to sit comfortably in a chair. He or she may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide him/her through the exercise by providing the following instructions:
  - Put one hand on your abdomen. Concentrate on taking deep slow breaths, so that you can feel your abdomen going in and out as you breathe. Sometimes it can help to breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth. You might want to try counting to yourself as you breathe in and out. You can also repeat a word to yourself each time you take a breath, like “strong,” or “calm,” or “relax.” Take a few minutes right now to just practice taking deep breaths in and out.”
  - This kind of breathing exercise takes practice. Try practicing for a few minutes every day when you are feeling calm. If you get used to it while you are feeling calm, you will be able to use it when you are feeling stressed, for example, like right before a test.”

## Muscle Relaxation Exercises



- Ask adolescent to sit comfortably in a chair. He or she may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide him/her through the exercise by providing the following instructions:
  - This exercise is used to help you relieve some of that tension by focusing on relaxing your muscles. I will ask you to tense a specific muscle group for 5 seconds, and then relax it for 10 seconds. While relaxing your muscles, do so completely and let the muscle go completely limp. While relaxing, try to remember the pleasant feeling of the moment.
  - Hold your right arm straight out in front of you and bend your hand upward pointing your fingers toward the ceiling. Hold that tension. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax

and let your arm drop to your side. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.

- Hold your left arm straight out in front of you and bend your hand upward pointing your fingers toward the ceiling. Hold that tension. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and let your arm drop to your side. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step
- Shrug your shoulders, raising them as high as possible. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and let your shoulders drop down. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
- Sit up straight in your chair. Arch your back as much as you can. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and sit back in your chair. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
- Close your eyes tightly. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax and leave them closed but softly. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
- Tighten your jaw muscles as much as you can, clenching your teeth together. (Count 5 seconds). Now relax your jaw muscles and unclench your teeth. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
- Bend your neck forward, trying to touch your chin to your chest. (Count 5 seconds). Now bring your neck back upright. Count 10 seconds, then proceed to the next step.
- Straighten both legs, stretching them outward and tensing all the muscles. (Count 5 seconds). Now let them relax and bring them back down to the floor. Count 10 seconds.
- Take three nice deep breaths, and remember that feeling of relaxation and calm.

## Guided Imagery Exercise #1

(introduction to imagery)



- Ask adolescent to sit comfortably in a chair. He or she may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide him/her through the exercise by providing the following instructions:
  - Choose a relaxing scene. Think of the most relaxing place you have ever been. The place can be real, or it can be imagined. For example, your place can be the beach, or it can be a castle in the clouds. There are no right or wrong answers, and your imagination is limitless! When you have chosen your place try to imagine it using all your senses - sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, and temperature. Create as much detail in your mind as possible.
  - Now chose a word or phrase that will help you recall this scene (e.g., ocean, my relaxing spot). Take a few deep breaths, and go through your scene in your mind. (Allow about 10 minutes to practice).
  - As you become more confident in using this imagery technique, try using it during the course of your day. You can practice during a study period, for example, or on your way to school. Try to practice at least two times per day, and repeat your word or phrase several times to yourself at the end of your practice when you are relaxed.

## Guided Imagery Exercise #2

(guided imagery with suggestions for relaxation)

- Ask adolescent to sit comfortably in a chair. He or she may sit on the floor if that is more comfortable. Guide him/her through the exercise by providing the following instructions:
  - Sit in a comfortable position with your arms and legs uncrossed. Let your eyes focus gently on a point in front of you. Begin with slow, rhythmic breathing, focusing on every breath – feel where it is in your body, focus on that sensation with the knowledge that your body knows how to find comfort and how to conduct the breathing process without you having to concentrate on it.
  - As you continue to feel relaxed and calm, I want you to experience the sense of relaxation you feel in your body. Notice that the muscles in your feet, legs, hips, chest, arms, back, neck, and head are feeling looser and more relaxed. Feel the tension leaving your body as you experience warmth and comfort. The warmth is spreading through your body and along with it comes comfort and relaxation.

- Now imagine that there is a large, open pouch in front of you. Into this pouch, I'd like you to put in all your worries, fears, and anxieties. Imagine the anxiety, fears, and worries as a gray mist that comes out of your body every time you exhale. As it comes out, it goes into this pouch and cannot re-enter your body. Visualize the gray mist entering the pouch and feel the warmth that enters your body as a result of having the anxiety, worries, and fears exiting. Once you are ready, close the pouch and feel comfort in knowing that the fears and worries will not come back into your body. Focus on the feeling of warmth throughout your body.
- Now I'd like to help you find a state of deeper relaxation and concentration. Imagine you are at the top of a staircase – any kind of staircase where you feel most comfortable. As you look down the staircase, take a breath in and go down one step, feeling secure and planting both feet firmly on the step. Again, focus on the sense of warmth and comfort. Now, when you are ready, go down to the second step, going deeper into relaxation. Now, go to the third step and notice the corridor. Stop briefly and look at the very long corridor, with doors on either side.
- You are not sure what is behind each door so take some time and let your intuition guide you toward a particular door. Once you have opened the door, examine the scene there. If that is a scene that feels most comfortable to you, go ahead and step inside the room. This door may lead to a pleasant scene or memory, sometime when you felt at your best – relaxed, without a care or concern for time, without any worries or demands. Stay there and take in the energy. What do you see? What do you smell and feel? Do you feel a particular sensation? Take in this feeling and store it securely in your mind, knowing that your mind can create this memory, and with increased practice you can more quickly achieve this feeling of security, calm, and strength in moments when you need it most. Again, feel the warmth and healing that surround you as you take in the comfort and relaxing feeling of this scene.
- Now, when you are ready, go back out into the corridor and face toward the staircase. Take your time, and go at your own speed, there is absolutely no rush. When you feel ready, go up to the first step. As you do so, you will feel slightly more alert, but with a continued sense of relaxation and well-being. (give some time). If you are ready, go ahead and take the next two steps up the staircase. Again, you will feel increasingly more alert, but continue to experience and enjoy a sense of relaxation and well-being.
- I want you to take your time, take rhythmic breaths, and continue to experience this feeling of safety, warmth, and relaxation. Once you feel ready, go ahead and open your eyes. There is no rush, do this at your own pace and as you feel ready.