

# Relaxation Exercises

Lie down on your back in a quiet and comfortable place. Put a pillow under your knees if that makes your back more comfortable. Put one hand over your belly button and the other hand on one side of your rib cage. Begin breathing deeply: first push your abdomen up until you feel your lower hand rise and feel your breath go down deep. Then breathe into your rib cage and your other hand will rise as your breath stretches your rib cage. This is all one continuous breath. Practice this complete breath a few minutes until you get the feel of deep inhalation and full exhalation. This is important. (You can do this any time and any place to relax your body and mind.) Then move on to the next part.

**Eyes** — Take a deep breath and at the same time close your eyes as tightly as you can. Hold your breath and eyes tight for 5 seconds. Then release your breath and open your eyes all at once.

**Forehead** — Take a full breath and raise your eyebrows up toward your hair line as high as you can. Hold 5 seconds and then release the breath and brow together.

**Mouth** — Take a full breath. Hold 5 seconds and then release, letting your breath whoosh out your mouth.

**Face** — Imagine that your nose is the center of your face. Take a breath and scrunch your whole face up tightly towards your nose, tight as you can. Hold 5 seconds and then let go all at once. Feel the relaxation and change in your face.

**Face** — Take a breath and stretch your face as wide open as you can. Open your eyes & look way up over your head. Open your mouth wide and stick your tongue out as far as it can go. Stretch hard for 5 seconds and then relax your face and breathe.

**Neck** — Breathe and shrug your shoulders up to your ears as hard as you can. Hold, then release. Breathe in and push your hands towards your feet against an invisible wall. Hold, then release.

**Arms** — Breathe, bend your elbow and tighten your bicep (upper arm). Hold, then release. Breathe, tighten your fists and arms, lift your arms up a few inches, hold then release.

**Chest** — Breathe in, stretch your chest and ribs as far as you can. Hold then release.

**Abdomen** — Breathe, stretch your abdomen as far as you can. Hold, then release with a whoosh.

**Hips** — Breathe, tighten your buttocks and anus and hips. Hold, then release.

**Back** — Breathe in, arch your back slightly from neck to hips. Hold, then release.

**Legs** — Breathe, press your legs together hard. Hold, then release.

**Legs** — Breathe, point your toes up to your head hard. Hold, then release.

**Feet** — Breathe, curl your toes under and point your feet hard. Hold, then release.

**Finale** — Breathe in, tighten your face toward your nose, make fists and tighten your arms, point your toes and tighten your legs, lift arms and legs a couple of inches, lift head a bit, tighten more, and in a big whoosh, let yourself go. Fall back down, feel yourself relaxed, and let yourself sink in. Breathe full breaths freely exhaling, and see how you feel. Lie there relaxed, aware of your breathing.

**Getting Up** — Take a deep breath full of life and exhale any tensions you feel left. Wiggle your fingers and toes gently. Slowly roll your head side to side. Open your eyes and slowly return to the outside world, mindful of the relaxation you can give yourself. Try doing this once a day for a week, and see what happens. You may learn some things about yourself.

**Fast relaxation exercise for when you can't lie down, or won't take the time, or whatever:**

1. Close your eyes, and give yourself 5 (or 10 or 20) breaths to think of nothing other than your breath. Repeat the cycle if you wish. Relax your shoulders and arms too.
2. Take a deep breath and feel you are stretching your whole body like a balloon. Release your breath, empty the balloon & the tension, too.
3. Take a deep breath, and shrug your shoulders slowly up to your ears as you breathe in. Breathe out and slowly let your shoulders down all the way free of tension.
4. Train yourself to let your shoulders down every time you breathe out.
5. Relax your arms and hands. More slowly than you have ever moved, bring your thumb and forefinger together to touch. Then slower, separate them. Repeat each finger.
6. Breathe in, tense the whole body, and release with a whoosh.

Prepared by Amy Ream with help from friends and sages. Be nice to yourself & enjoy.