

# Relaxation

## Learning to let go...

What is relaxation?

Relaxation is a way of letting go of physical, emotional and mental stress and tension.

Can't you just flop on the sofa and watch TV?

No – relaxation is a skill which takes time and practice to learn and improve.

What if you haven't got time to relax?

If you feel guilty about relaxing, it's important to give yourself permission to relax on a regular basis. In the long term, not relaxing enough can make you more stressed and can trigger anxiety and depression. Try to build relaxation into your day-to-day life, rather than waiting until you are under a lot of pressure.

Do you need expensive CDs?

You don't have to have CDs – relaxation comes from inside you. Some people do find CDs helpful though; ask your guide if you would like to try one.

How long does it take?

Relaxation need only take few minutes, though you can take longer. It depends how much time you have, Try to aim to practise relaxation on at least 5 days a week, even if it's only for a short time.

Try this method of relaxation:

- Find somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed. Sit or lie down somewhere where you will be warm or comfortable.
- Take a few minutes to get comfortable. Let your body get loose and heavy. Let the bed, chair or floor support your body completely.
- Close your eyes. Breathe easily and normally. Concentrate on your breathing for a few moments and allow your mind to clear as much as possible.  
**If you think your breathing is uneven or shallow, ask your guide for the leaflet on relaxed breathing...**
- Think of one word which you associate with being relaxed and keep it in your mind. Say your 'relax' word each time you breathe out, letting go of as much tension as you can with each breath out. Don't worry or get impatient if your mind keeps wandering, just bring it back gently to your chosen word every time.
- Keep breathing in and out slowly and saying your word to yourself. Keep going for 5 to 15 minutes.
- If you are worried about falling asleep, use a quiet alarm or ask someone to knock gently on the door.
- When you have finished, give yourself time to come round slowly – try not to jump up and start rushing around.

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Continued...

Try to practise relaxation regularly, several times a week.  
Don't worry if you miss a few days – just start again.

Keep going for at least 2 weeks and keep a record in the table below.  
It will help you work out what makes you stressed and what sort of relaxation works best for you. If you feel your relaxation practice isn't working, ask your guide for help.

RELAXATION DIARY		
Day / Date	Anxiety level <u>before</u> relaxation (Rate 0 – 10) Reasons for this...	Anxiety level <u>after</u> relaxation (Rate 0 – 10) Relaxation method...

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