

How to Relax

While sitting or lying

- Sit up straight or lie down with your back straight, your feet flat, and your hands resting lightly on your thighs or stomach.
- If possible, close your eyes. You may do the exercise without closing your eyes, but closing your eyes will help you relax a bit more. Do not clench your eyes shut. Let your eyelids fall naturally.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose, counting to 5. Hold the breath for a count of 5. Breathe out slowly, counting to five. Repeat.
- This exercise is performed by tensing and holding a set of muscles for a count of 5, and then relaxing the set of muscles for a count of 5.
- When you tense each muscle set, do it as hard as you can without hurting yourself. When you release the hold, be as relaxed as possible.
- Begin by tensing your feet. Do this by pulling your feet off the floor and your toes toward you while keeping your heels on the floor. Hold for a slow count of 5.
- Release the hold. Let your feet fall gently back. Feel the relaxation. Think about how it feels compared to when you tensed the muscles. Relax for a count of 5.
- Next tense your thigh muscles as hard as you can. Hold for a count of 5. Relax the muscles and count to 5.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles and hold for a count of 5. Relax the muscles for a count of 5. Be sure you are continuing to sit up straight.
- Tense your arm and hand muscles by squeezing your hands into fists as hard as you can. Hold for a count of 5. Relax the muscles completely for a count of 5.
- Tighten your upper back by pushing your shoulders back as if you are trying to touch your shoulder blades together. Hold for a count of 5. Relax for a count of 5.
- Tense your shoulders by raising them toward your ears as if shrugging and holding for a count of 5. Relax for a count of 5.
- Tighten your neck first by gently moving your head back (as if looking at the ceiling) and holding for 5. Relax for 5. Then gently drop your head forward and hold for 5. Relax for a count of 5.
- Tighten your face muscles. First open your mouth wide and hold for 5. Relax for 5. Then raise your eyebrows up high and hold for 5. Relax for 5. Finally clench your eyes tightly shut and hold for 5. Relax (with eyes gently closed) for 5.

- Finish the exercise with breathing. Breathe in slowly through your nose, counting to 5. Hold the breath for a count of 5. Breathe out slowly, counting to five. Repeat 4 times.

Relaxation Imagery Exercise

- Have someone read this to you to help you relax.

Settle back in your chair or your bed, make yourself comfortable. Become aware of how your body is touching the surface and imagine that you can actually sink right down through that surface, letting yourself totally relax and be calm and comfortable. Become aware of your face. Feel the air as it touches the warmth and the stillness of your skin. The warmth and the stillness of your skin as it touches the coolness and movement of the air. Follow the air as it goes in your nose and your mouth, down the back of your throat and into your lungs. Feel the coolness of the air that slides down the back of your throat. Feel your lungs open to receive the air and close to push it back out again. Let your awareness stay centered with your breathing, following the air down into your center, allowing your mind and your body and your spirit to come together inside yourself, centered, calm, relaxed inside yourself.

Imagine now that a cloud is forming down around your feet, that soft, fluffy, swirling cloud is forming down around your feet, slowly swirling around your feet softly caressing your feet, comforting, relaxing your feet. Slowly the cloud climbs up around your legs, softly swirling, comforting and caressing your legs, relaxing, comforting your legs, as it softly swirls higher and higher up around your legs.

And slowly the cloud continues to climb up around your hips, softly swirling, comforting and caressing and your hips, softly wrapping your hips, continuing to climb up around your hips. And the cloud continues to climb up around your hands and your arms, your chest and your back, and your shoulders, softly swirling, comfortable caressing, relaxing, slowly sliding around your hands and your arms, your back and your chest, your shoulders.

The cloud continues to climb up around your neck, your chin and your mouth; the back of your head and your ears and your cheeks and your nose; your eyes and your forehead, and the sides of your head, so that your whole body is softly surrounded by a swirling, comforting cloud that relaxes and comforts your body. Feeling good, feeling calm, feeling comfortable.

And very slowly and very safely the cloud begins to lift you, very slowly and very safely, very comfortable, your cloud begins to lift you, up into the air, up in the room. And your cloud lifts you higher and higher, very slowly

and very safely and very comfortably. And then your cloud takes you out of the room right into the sky. You rise above the treetops, slowly, comfortably, your cloud continues to take you higher and higher, comfortable and calmly, safely and securely, up into the sky, up with the other clouds.

And now let your cloud take you, anywhere you would like to go. Go to a far off land, you can go somewhere you've never been before, or somewhere you've been before and want to see again. You can let your cloud take you into outer space, safely, securely. Let you and your cloud go wherever you would like to go.

{ Three minute break }

Alright now, slowly and gently let yourself let your cloud bring you back, slowly and gently, let your cloud begin to bring you back, an easy relaxed pace, coming back toward the room. Come back through clouds, come down through the treetops, and slowly and safely, your cloud brings you back into the room. And slowly and gently, the cloud lays you down, comfortably and calmly. Now very slowly your cloud begins to slide down your body, swirling, head and your forehead, your eyes and your nose, and the back of your head and your ears, your cheeks, your jaw, and your neck. Then the cloud continues to leave your body, sliding down and leaving your shoulders, and your arms and your chest and your back, slowly swirling, continuing to slide down. The cloud leaves your hips, continuing to slide down against your legs, slowly swirling down your legs, softly caressing, sliding down your legs. Your cloud continues to swirl down and flies off your feet, slowly leaving your body and you know that you can bring your cloud back to you anytime you are willing to center inside yourself and use your imagination to bring your cloud to you. And gradually and gently, bring yourself fully back to the room, aware of the sounds of the room, aware of how your body feels, and gradually and gently, as you're ready, take one or two or three deep breaths, and open your eyes.