

### ***Relaxation Instructions***

**Note:** each use of ellipses ( . . . ) or asterisk (\*) signifies a 20-30 second wait.

#### ***I. Calming Imagery:***

Sit back comfortably in your chair, close your eyes, and let yourself begin to relax. Feel your muscles relaxing and your mind is slowing down. Time is slowing down. There's lots of time. You feel more at ease . . . at peace . . . at peace with the universe . . . at peace with yourself . . . so peaceful . . . quiet . . . relaxed . . . serene . . . tranquil . . . calm.

As you breathe easily and gently, you feel yourself relaxing more and more. Comfortable and relaxed . . . comfortable and relaxed . . . more comfortable . . . more at peace. Calmness is present throughout your body and mind.

Calmness, peace, and relaxation are spreading throughout every part of your body and mind. More and more relaxed . . . at peace . . . calm. Complete peace, release, total calm, peace of mind. At peace with the universe . . . serene.

More and more relaxed . . . at peace . . . calm . . . at ease. You feel as if you're sinking into a soft water bed or as if you're floating on a soft, soft cloud. Floating gently and easily. So relaxed and calm and comfortable. Soft, gentle, quiet, peaceful, restful relaxation. Mind and body are relaxing more and more, thoughts are fading away. So relaxed and comfortable, so at ease . . . at peace . . . tranquil . . . relaxed . . . at ease . . . peace of mind.

A feeling of well-being . . . as if all your cares have rolled away . . . as though nothing matters . . . nothing at all . . . a feeling of "I don't care." . . .

***II. Muscle Relaxation Exercises:***

While lying on the comfortable couch, I want you to concentrate on achieving a state of total and complete relaxation. You may have already had practice using techniques of muscle tension to achieve relaxation. Remember to remain as completely relaxed and calm as possible. I am going to ask you to tense and hold various groups of muscles throughout your body. In this way, you will quickly become aware of the difference between muscular tension and relaxation. Also, each time a muscle group is tensed and then relaxed, it will become more completely relaxed than it was before.

We will begin with the muscles of your hands, arms, and biceps of both right and left arms. When I say to, I want you to tense all of those muscles at the same time. Tense both of your hands and forearms by making tight fists. Tense your biceps muscles by pressing down on the couch with your elbows. Okay now, tense all of those muscle groups.

Notice how they feel when they are tight. Hold it. \* Okay, now relax. Notice how it feels as you let these muscles go limp.

Now with your arms remaining limp, concentrate on your facial and neck muscles. When I say to, tense these muscles by wrinkling your forehead, squinting your eyes, and raising your eyebrows. At the same time, pull the corners of your mouth back and wrinkle your nose. As you tense your face, also tense the muscles in your neck by tightening your neck and making it tremble. Okay, tense all of these muscles. Notice how the tension feels. Hold it. Okay, now relax. Let these muscles go completely limp. Relax deeper and deeper. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation in these muscles. Let them become as relaxed as your arms and hands. Deeply and completely relaxed. \*Okay, now tense all of these muscles again. Hold it. Notice the

tension. Okay, now relax. Let the surge of relaxation flow in. Become deeply and completely relaxed. Concentrate on the feelings of pleasantness that accompany these feelings of relaxation.

Now while you continue to relax your face, neck, and arm muscles, let's relax the chest, shoulders, upper back, and stomach muscles. To tense these muscles, take a deep breath and hold it; at the same time, pull your shoulder blades back and together, while at the same time making your stomach hard. Okay, now tense these muscles. Hold it. Notice how it feels. \* Now relax. Let the warmth of relaxation flow into your back, shoulders, and stomach. Lie there for a while and enjoy the feeling of relaxation. \* Okay, now tense the same muscle groups again. Hold it. Hold it. \* Okay, now relax. Feel the surge of relief as relaxation flows in. Let these muscles go completely limp on the couch.

Now let's relax the muscles in your legs. Tighten these muscles by pushing both of your ankles and feet firmly down on the couch. Okay, tense these muscles. Hold it. Hold it. \* Okay, now relax. Let the relaxation flow in. You may even have pleasant sensations of warmth and heaviness as these muscles become more and more relaxed. Go on relaxing. Make sure there is no tightness anywhere in your body. Just let your body totally and completely relax. Enjoy the feeling of deep, complete relaxation. Relax more and more . . .

### ***III. Deep Diaphragmatic Instruction:***

Now, let's concentrate on your breathing for a few moments. Deep breathing can help you relax. Deep diaphragmatic breathing is just that—breathing deeply with the diaphragm.

The diaphragm is a large sheet of muscle that goes from across the lower edge of the rib cage under the lungs and attaches to your back. When you use your diaphragm correctly, your abdomen moves **out** as you **inhale** and your abdomen pulls **inward** as you **exhale**. Most people

breathe with their chests and not with their diaphragm. Chest breathing is shallow, whereas diaphragmatic breathing is deep. Deep breathing means that the lungs fill more fully and the body gets more oxygen.

Deep diaphragmatic breathing makes use of a built-in, natural relaxation response. The relaxation response occurs because when muscles release, they relax.

Let's try the exercise and discover this natural relaxation response.

Let yourself be aware of your breathing. Notice whether you are breathing through your mouth or your nose. Notice the pace of your breathing.

Now observe your body. In your mind, inspect all the muscle groups of your body and notice where you feel tension. Do this for a minute . . .

Return to your breathing. Begin breathing in deeply, through your nose then exhale through your mouth. Continue breathing in deeply, through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. Breathe deeply and evenly. As you exhale, notice what your muscles do. Notice how they begin to let go. Go on breathing deeply and evenly for a minute and notice what you feel throughout your body.

Each time you inhale, your diaphragm expands and your abdomen pushes out. Each time you exhale, your abdomen pulls in to your body. (If you are having difficulty, it may help if you place one hand on your abdomen so that you can monitor the movements of the diaphragm. Your hand should move out as you inhale. Your hand should move in as you exhale. You may have to force yourself to use the diaphragm at first.)

Continue breathing in and out; slowly . . . deeply . . . evenly.

Now let's inhale to a count of four. Inhale . . . one, two, three, four . . . and HOLD IT. Hold your breath to a count of four . . . one, two, three, four. And, exhale. Slowly to a count of

eight . . . one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight.

And, repeat. Inhale to a count of four. Hold your breath to a count of four. And exhale to a count of eight. Breathe slowly and evenly.

As you exhale, your muscles feel warm. They may begin to feel heavy or light. You may begin to feel tingly all over. Breathe deeply and evenly. Just let yourself enjoy whatever sensations happen to you. Breathe deeply and evenly.

Continue to breathe deeply and evenly, and notice how energy begins to flow throughout your body. Breathe in to a count of four. Hold to a count of four. And . . . exhale to a count of eight. Go on breathing and observing what you experience. Just let whatever happens, happen. Observe and enjoy. Continue to breathe in this way for a few minutes . . .

#### ***IV. Autogenic Relaxation:***

Now, let's focus your attention on autogenic relaxation. "Autogenic" means "to apply some process to yourself, by yourself." The format of autogenic relaxation is to repeat some self-instructions (e.g. "My arms are warm") several times while you observe the sensations in the area of the body that is described by the instruction.

The idea of autogenic relaxation is incredibly simple. You repeat to yourself a series of six self-instructions. As you say the instruction in your mind, you are to observe what you experience in your body. You are only to observe. There should be **no** attempt to make it happen. As difficult as it may be for you to take a passive-observing attitude, it must be understood that any other attitude may not be successful.

In fact, if you try to make something happen, the paradoxical effect often occurs. For example, if we monitor a person on a biofeedback machine that measures finger temperature and

tell the person to “make his or her temperature go up” while reciting the instruction, “My hand is warm,” the opposite will occur. The temperature will go down. In contrast, when a person repeats the self-instruction while maintaining a passive, observing attitude, the temperature will go in the same direction of the instruction. With autogenic relaxation, we must give up control to exercise control.

As you recite a self-instruction, breathe deeply and evenly. Synchronize your instructions with slow exhalations and observe what you experience. Some of the sensations that you might experience, such as tingling, twitching, and itching, may be uncomfortable at first. For some people, the feelings of warmth, heaviness, and occasional numbness may be disturbing. All these sensations are signs that tension is being released and relaxation is flowing. Feelings of heaviness, warmth, or lightness are the key signs of relaxation. With repeated experience with the sensations of relaxation, you will become accustomed to the sensations.

Say to yourself the specified number of times as you exhale:

1. My hands and feet are heavy and warm. (5 times)
2. My feet and legs are heavy and warm. (5 times)
3. My solar plexus is warm. (5 times) (If you have ulcers, omit this direction.)
4. My breathing is deep and even. (10 times)
5. My heartbeat is calm and regular. (10 times)
6. My forehead is cool. (5 times)
7. When I open my eyes, I remain relaxed and refreshed. (3 times)

***V. Reawakening Exercises:***

Before you open your eyes, it is helpful to do some movement exercises so that your body is not suddenly aroused. Do the following sequences of body movements:

1. Move hands and arms about.
2. Move legs and feet about.
3. Rotate head.
4. Stretch shoulders and torso.
5. Open your eyes and sit up.