

## **Deep Breathing**

By concentrating on our breathing, this technique allows the rest of our body to relax itself. It is an important part of yoga and martial arts for this reason.

1. Get into a comfortable position.
2. Slowly relax your body.
3. Begin to inhale slowly through your nose if possible. Fill the lower part of your chest first, then the middle and top part of your chest and lungs. Be sure to do this slowly, over 8–10 seconds.
4. Hold your breath for a second or two.
5. Then quietly and easily relax and let the air out.
6. Wait a few seconds and repeat this cycle.
7. If you find yourself getting dizzy, then you are overdoing it. Slow down.
8. You can also imagine yourself in a peaceful situation such as near a warm, gentle ocean. Imagine that you rise on the gentle swells of the water as you inhale and sink down into the waves as you exhale.
9. You can continue this breathing technique for as long as you like.

## **Guided Imagery**

In this technique, the goal is to visualize yourself in a peaceful setting.

1. Lie on your back with your eyes closed.
2. Imagine yourself in your favorite, peaceful place. The place may be on a sunny beach with the ocean breezes caressing you, swinging in a hammock in the mountains or in your own backyard. Any place that you find peaceful and relaxing is OK.
3. See and feel your surroundings, hear the peaceful sounds, smell the flowers or the barbecue, feel the warmth of the sun and any other sensations that you find. Relax and enjoy it.
4. You can return to this place any time you need to. As you use this place more and more you will find it easier to relax as this imagery becomes easier to visualize.

# **Progressive Relaxation**

1. After finding a quiet place and several free minutes to practice, sit or lie down and make yourself comfortable.
2. Begin by tensing all the muscles in your face. Make a tight grimace, close your eyes as tightly as possible, clench your teeth, even move your ears up if you can. Hold this for the count of eight as you inhale.
3. Now exhale and relax completely. Let your face go completely lax, as though you were sleeping. Feel the tension seep from your facial muscles, and enjoy the feeling.
4. Next, completely tense your neck and shoulders, again inhaling and counting to eight. Then exhale and relax the muscles.
5. Continue down your body, repeating the procedure with all the following muscle groups:
  - chest
  - abdomen
  - entire right arm
  - right forearm and hand (making a fist)
  - right hand
  - entire left arm
  - left forearm and hand (again, making a fist)
  - left hand
  - buttocks
  - entire right leg
  - lower right leg and foot
  - right foot
  - entire left leg
  - lower left leg and foot
  - left foot
6. For the shortened version, which includes just four main muscle groups:
  - face
  - neck, shoulders and arms
  - abdomen and chest
  - buttocks, legs and feet

You can use this technique to quickly de-stress any time, by tensing and relaxing each of these muscle groups.

