

## Helpful hints for relaxation

This information is intended to help you manage stress and anxiety.

The best way is to make time for yourself and practise calming exercises regularly. Stress itself can be a positive emotion that gets you motivated and forward thinking. However, when it gets out of control for any reason, you may forget what it is like to feel calm and relaxed. Here are some ideas you may like to practise.

### Calming breath

Your brain usually controls your breathing without you thinking about it. If you become anxious, your breathing can become shallow, uneven and faster. Quiet breathing techniques can help to calm the body and mind. With practice, these techniques can help your breathing during anxious moments so you feel more relaxed.

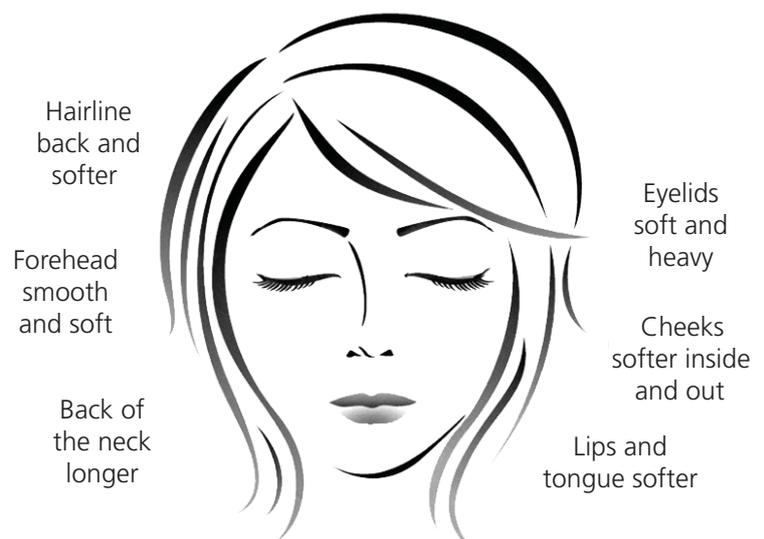
1. Start by sitting quietly. Breathe in and out through your nose and be aware of your breath. Allow your breathing to slow down to be comfortable and steady.
2. As you settle, counting your breaths can be helpful:
  - breathe in for a count of four
  - pause a moment
  - breathe out for a count of five
  - pause a moment
3. Continue as above, lengthening the count (if it feels comfortable) to slow down your breathing. Your breath should be gentle, not heavy, the out breath lasting a little longer. Try to practise for a few minutes regularly.

There are many times when this type of breathing can help, for example when you are afraid, feel anxious or cannot sleep.

### Relaxing your face

1. Start by sitting quietly. Be aware of your face becoming softer and freer.
2. Focus on the space between your eyebrows.
3. As your face relaxes, be aware of your breath.

Notice the sensations of breathing, the cool air coming in and the warm air going out of the nostrils. Feel your arms supported, hands relaxed and experience a quiet time.



### Relaxation to calm the body

1. Lie down flat with a pillow under your head; knees can be bent. Gently place the palms of your hands on your lower rib cage.
2. Breathe steadily, feeling the movement of your body against your hands as you breathe.
3. Allow yourself to feel at ease and able to relax. Continue to breathe slowly and easily for as long as is comfortable.
4. In order to relax a part of your body, simply think about it and then say "Relax" softly in your mind. Continue and focus on peaceful thoughts. You may like to try this to help you sleep.

## Relaxation and stress management techniques:

- make yourself warm and comfortable, sitting or lying down
  - choose any part of your body you think needs relaxing, then tighten and release it for example, lift your shoulders, squeeze and relax
  - place your hands on your lower rib cage, little fingers just above your navel
  - soften your hands and gently soften your face
  - try to breathe through your nose unless advised differently
  - feel your body moving gently under your hands as your quiet breathing calms you and releases any discomfort. Breathe softly in and out through your nose. This warms, filters and moistens your breath
  - quietly be aware of your breath
  - as you breathe in, say to yourself... breathing in makes me calm
  - as you breathe out, say to yourself... breathing out brings me peace
  - take time to breathe, relax and 'let go'
- Settle and enjoy for a short time.

## You may like to add a visualisation

Imagine a special place or occasion that has a 'good feel' about it for you. Re-visiting a place that feels nice is calming to the human system.

For example:-

- a walk on the beach: feel the sun, see the colours
- a lovely garden: hear the sounds, smell the scent
- a family outing: remember the peaceful feelings

You may like to vary your relaxation time by listening to a Relaxation CD or your favourite music, or perhaps vary the time eg. 20 - 30 minutes.

When ready to finish, deepen your breathing and become aware of your surroundings, before moving around.

Your response to relaxation brings its own rewards. Aim to feel calmer and cultivate this feeling into each day.

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Relaxation class times, no need to book, you may attend as many classes as you wish:-

**Monday 2.30 - 4.00pm**

**Tuesday 10.00 - 11.30am**

**Thursday 11.00 - 12.30pm**

Prior to the first session, you will meet the relaxation therapist who will discuss with you your individual needs. The therapist will also explain the content of these sessions and how they will help you.

**Waitrose**

We are grateful to our local branches of Waitrose for their support in funding these classes.