

# Mindfulness and Relaxation

## What is Mindfulness and Relaxation?

“goal... is to maintain awareness moment by moment, disengaging oneself from strong attachment to beliefs, thoughts, or emotions, thereby developing a greater sense of emotional balance and well-being”  
“the body more or less pauses for rest and recovery”

### Improves your overall health

- protects your heart
- encourages good blood flow
  - boosts immunity
- lowers the risk of getting sick
- reduces muscle tension and pain

### Improves mood and thinking

- lowers stress
- reduces anger or frustration
  - increases attention
- improves brain processes
- decreases sadness and anxiety

## What are the benefits?

## Let's do it!

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This is done while sitting or lying down (although lying down is the better option!), and preferably with eyes closed.

1. Direct your attention to the first muscle group.
2. Slowly tighten that muscle group for 5 seconds.
3. Release and relax that muscle group for 10 seconds.
4. Repeat steps for all muscle groups, in order.
5. Finally, relax your whole body. Count back from 4-1.

(1) Dominant hand and forearm  
(2) Dominant biceps

(3) Nondominant hand and forearm  
(4) Nondominant biceps

(5) Forehead  
(6) Upper cheeks and nose  
(7) Lower cheeks and jaws  
(8) Neck and throat  
(9) Chest, shoulders, and upper back  
(10) Abdominal or stomach region

(11) Dominant thigh  
(12) Dominant calf  
(13) Dominant foot

(14) Nondominant thigh  
(15) Nondominant calf  
(16) Nondominant foot

*You can do this basically anywhere, anytime, especially if you feel like you need a discreet break from the world.*

**1. Look for the time and space to reflect.** It doesn't matter where you stay, and this does not require any fancy gear to do – just the space where you know you can let your thoughts fly free.

**2. Pay attention to the present moment.** Your mind does not have to go blank, nor should you worry about being at peace instantaneously. Just focus your energy on what is in front of you.

**3. Let your judgments slip away.** Don't berate yourself should these negative thoughts come up while you're practicing mindfulness – just take note of them and then let them fly away.

**4. Practice returning to the present moment.** A lot of thoughts will continue cross your brain, but mindfulness is not suppressing them; it's recognizing when you've wandered off and bringing yourself back into the present.

1. **Find a comfortable position** – ideally sitting or lying. Close your eyes or let them stay open as preferred.
2. **Start by taking a deep breath:** inhale through your nostrils for 3 counts, hold your breath for 2 counts, and exhale through your mouth for 4 counts.
3. **Be aware of your whole body.** Notice the wholeness of it, the shape and the weight, and the sensations it perceives. If you notice anything tight or tense, relax it.
4. **Breathe in and out.** Keep your breathing rhythm natural. Notice where your breath goes in and out in your body. Try to feel its sensation.
5. **Stay in this state for 5-7 minutes.** Should you feel your mind wandering, redirect your attention to your breathing. If helpful, envision a relaxing place or repeat your favorite word in your mind to help with the rhythm.
6. Afterwards, **bring awareness back to your body**, and continue relaxing. Open your eyes, and be ready to start anew.

## References

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