



Employee Assistance Program

Relaxation Techniques

While some stress is a normal part of life, long-term stress can lead to health problems if not managed. A key component of stress management is learning how to relax.

Believe it or not, relaxation techniques aren't something that most of us automatically know how to do. Instead, relaxation techniques are a set of learned skills that take some practice and are well-worth learning! Relaxation techniques may reduce stress symptoms by:

- Slowing breathing and heart rate
- Lowering blood pressure
- Increasing blood flow
- Reducing muscle tension, chronic pain, anger and frustration
- Improving concentration
- Boosting confidence for dealing with life's challenges

What You Can Do

General categories of relaxation techniques include:

- Autogenic relaxation: involves imagery and body awareness such as thinking about a calming memory or place and then focusing on different physical sensations such as your heartbeat or breathing. You may repeat a certain word or phrase in order to help you focus on relaxing and reducing muscle tension.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** focuses on slowly tensing and relaxing each muscle group while paying attention to the physical sensations it produces. This can help you notice the difference between muscle tension and relaxation.
- Visualization: involves forming mental images to create a calming or relaxing place. An example may include imagining yourself near a river and focusing on your surroundings and senses the sound of the water rushing, the feel of the sun, the smell of the trees, etc.

Other common relaxation techniques are massage, meditation, yoga and tai chi. To get the most out of these relaxation techniques, use them along with the following health tips:

- **Exercise.** Being active can improve your physical and emotional health. For example, it can help reduce the risk of certain health conditions. It can also help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Eat healthy. A balanced diet is necessary for the body to remain healthy and function properly.
- Focus on the positive. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to put a positive spin on them.
- Regular sleep. Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.
- Support. Build a team of people you can turn to when life is challenging.

For more information about stress and relaxation techniques, visit the website or call the toll free number listed below.



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