

# Relaxation

There are lots of different ways you can relax and different people find different things relaxing. Some people like using strategies to calm the mind, some prefer to relax their bodies, and others like to do activities to distract themselves from thinking too much. The following section gives you different ways to relax.

**Give them a try and see what ones work for you!**

## Relaxing the mind using mindfulness

It's natural for our minds to wander. Unfortunately, when we get caught up in thinking too much we miss enjoying the present moment we are in.

Mindfulness can be tricky at first. Our minds are used to wandering, and we will often be tempted to fix on a thought or a feeling. When you first try these exercises, you will probably find that your mind wanders after a minute or two. That's normal — minds do that! Don't give yourself a hard time, remember you are still learning. The more you practice doing that, the better you train your brain to pay attention and the easier it will get.



## Mindfulness exercises for beginners

### Mindful Breathing Meditation

1. Sit up in a comfortable way. Close your eyes.
2. Notice your breathing as you inhale and exhale normally. Just pay attention to your breath as it goes in and out. Can you feel the place where the air tickles your nostrils? What about when your breath comes out over the lips?
3. Pay attention to how the breath gently moves your body. Can you notice your belly or your chest moving as you breathe?
4. Try to take longer, slower breaths that fill your belly up with air. Notice how the belly expands and rises as you inhale, and falls as you exhale.
5. Sit for a few minutes, just paying attention to your gentle breathing. See how relaxed you can feel just sitting, breathing in and out.
6. When your mind starts to wander and think about something else, gently guide your attention back to your breathing. If it helps you focus think the word 'relax' or quietly hum in time with each exhale, or say to yourself "I'm breathing in" on the inhale and "I'm breathing out" when you exhale.
7. When you're ready, you can open your eyes.

## Lake Visualisation

1. Take a deep breath in and gently close your eyes.
2. Imagine yourself relaxing by a beautiful, calm lake. The breeze softly blows over the lake, watch the thousands of tiny ripples it creates on its surface. Listen to the birds singing happily in the trees. Feel how warm the sun is on your skin. Your surroundings are so calm, let that calm feeling wash over your entire body and mind.
3. Now it's time to release any worries, negative thoughts and emotions, and stress you have been keeping inside. Imagine them floating out of your body, up, out, and away. Watch them float into a cloud and then watch the cloud floating away, carrying them away with it. As you watch them leave your body, imagine the empty space they have left inside you.
4. Now imagine you are surrounded by a beautiful, sparkling light. Take a deep breath in, as you breathe in see yourself inhaling that sparkling light. The light represents love, peace, and calm and enters the empty space you made inside of you. Take a few more deep breaths, filling up your body with good energy. Feel the light travelling around your body, healing you and filling you with positivity.
5. When you are ready, open your eyes and have a big stretch.



## Mindful Showering

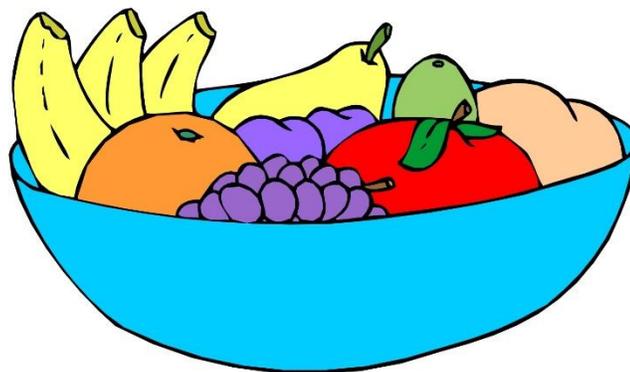
1. Run the shower and step in.
2. Under the shower, focus on how the water feels as falls onto your head and runs down your body. Notice the water warming and relaxing your muscles. Feel the soft, bubbly sensation of your soap as cleanses and moisturises your skin. As you wash, keep your movements slow, allowing yourself time to feel the different sensations.
3. Listen to the sound of the water as it lands on your body and on the floor. Imagine any negative thoughts, feelings, and stress being washed away by the water, imagine them running off you and down the drain.
4. Now take a deep breath and smell your soap. What does it smell like? Breathe in deeply, and breathe out slowly, allowing your whole body to relax further.
5. When you have finished showering, take a moment to appreciate the soft dry towel as it presses against your wet skin.
6. Take a moment to appreciate the natural feeling of cleanliness and relaxation before you move on with your day.



## Mindful Eating

Get a piece of fruit (e.g. an orange, an apple, or even something as small as a raisin). Your job is to eat the fruit slowly, without rushing while giving your full attention to what you're eating.

1. Start by holding the fruit. Roll it in your hand. Notice how it feels in your fingers. If you hold it firmly, is it squishy? Is it juicy?
2. Hold the fruit near your nose. What does it smell like?
3. Notice how the fruit looks. Pay attention to whether the skin is smooth or bumpy. Notice the different colours.
4. Now go ahead and taste your fruit. Notice how it feels on your tongue, and against your teeth. Notice the flavour, the texture, and the juiciness as you chew each piece slowly. Take your time as you chew, taste, smell, and feel each bite of the fruit.



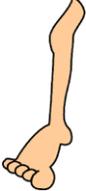
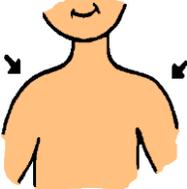
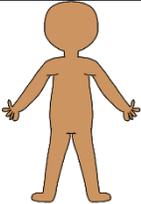


## Relaxing the body: muscle relaxation exercise

16

Muscle relaxation exercises simply involve squeezing each of your muscles in turn for five seconds and then relaxing them for ten seconds before moving on to the next muscle.

The best place to do this is in a quiet room where you won't be disturbed. You can lie down to do this or just sit in a comfortable position.

Take 3 deep breaths	
	Squeeze your foot for 5 seconds. Relax
	Squeeze your leg for 5 seconds. Relax
	Squeeze your stomach for 5 seconds. Relax
	Shrug your shoulders for 5 seconds. Relax
	Squeeze your arm & hand for 5 seconds. Relax
	Squeeze your whole body for 5 seconds. Relax
Take 3 deep breaths	