

How to Relax

Bills, deadlines, traffic jams – With all that life throws our way, it's not surprising that stress can sometimes overwhelm us.

After all, the effects of stress – both physical and emotional – are cumulative. The longer you go without doing something to relieve it, the worse it impacts you.

The remedy for stress is obvious: *Just relax.* But that's easier said than done! Fortunately, there are stress reduction techniques that really work.

Here are a few tips from Mayo Clinic¹:

- **Autogenic relaxation:** This technique uses both imagery and body awareness to lower stress. Mentally repeat words or suggestions to relax and reduce muscle tension. Imagine a peaceful place and focus on controlled, relaxing breathing, slowing your heart rate, or feeling physical sensations such as the release of tension from each arm or leg, one by one.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. One method is to start with the muscles in your toes and work your way up your body to your neck and face. Hold the muscle tension for at least five seconds, then relax for 30 seconds and repeat.
- **Visualization:** Visualize yourself in a place that relaxes you. Tune in to all your senses, including smell, sound and touch. For example, imagine yourself on the beach.

You would hear the sound of the waves lapping at the beach, smell the salty air and feel the sun's warmth on your skin. Make yourself as comfortable as possible when you do this. Find a quiet place to avoid distraction and sit in a relaxed way.

You may want to explore other relaxation techniques, such as yoga, music, exercise, or massage.

Being able to reach a relaxed state is a skill. Like any skill, it improves with practice. Be patient with yourself.

Need more tips? Visit your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) member website for articles, self-help programs and more on stress management. Remember, your EAP is here around the clock to connect you to a licensed professional if you need more support.

Need help?

Call toll-free, 24 hours a day,
seven days a week:

1-866-EAP-4SOC | 1-866-327-4762

TTY users should call 1-800-327-0801.

Or visit us at: eap4soc.mhn.com
and register with the company
code: soc

¹"Relaxation techniques: Try these steps to reduce stress." Mayo Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/stress-management/in-depth/relaxation-technique/art-20045368?pg=1>.