

## QUICK RELAXATION STRATEGIES

*The following relaxation techniques take only a few seconds to do. Because these are quick strategies, they will help you moderate your response to stressors without upsetting your daily routine. Try them, choose a few favorites, and use them whenever you perceive you are reacting to a stressor.*



### Diaphragmatic Breathing

Place one hand on your belly, just below the navel (belly button). On the inhalation your hand should move away from your body, on the exhalation your hand should move toward the body. Focus your attention on the movement of your hand. You can do this standing, sitting or lying down. Follow your hand for several breaths.



### Releasing Tension

Emphasize the difference between holding tension in your body and letting go of this tension. Try to bend your toes up as if to touch your shins. Hold them there while you tighten your thighs, buttocks, and fists. Take a deep breath and hold it while you clench your jaw and close your eyes. Hold all that tension for five seconds. Then, let it go all at once—don't ease off—feel the tension draining from your body as you exhale.



### Relaxation Response

Pick a word or phrase that has either positive or neutral connotations for you. (For example: "Easy," "I am relaxed," "Sparkle.") Sit quietly in a comfortable position and begin breathing slowly and naturally. On the exhale say to yourself your focus word or phrase. If your mind starts to wander, that's okay, just come back to your breathing and to repeating your focus word or phrase.



### The Four S's

First, smile and make your eyes sparkle. Yes, you can do it. Smile and make your eyes sparkle. Then, take a deep breath. As you let it out, just let your jaw hang slack, shoulders Sag, and forehead Smooth out. Go ahead, do it again. Smile with sparkling eyes, take a deep breath, let it out and feel your jaw go slack, shoulders sag, forehead smooth out. Four S's = smile, slack, sag, smooth.



### Right Here, Right Now

Most of us worry about events that never actually happen or things that have already happened. Reality consists of one time and one time only, the present. Repeat to yourself as often as needed throughout the day:

**Where am I? Here. What time is it? Now.**



### **Cool Air In, Warm Air Out**

With your eyes closed, shift your attention to the tip of your nose. As you breathe in, become aware of the air coming into your nostrils. As you breathe out, be aware of the sensation of the air passing back out. Perhaps you notice that the air coming in tends to be cooler and the air breathed out tends to be warmer. Just be aware of cool air in . . . and warm air out. Focusing on a physiological activity (air in and out) can help calm your mind and relax your body.



### **Heavy Feet**

Just imagine that your feet and legs are getting heavier and heavier with each breath out. It's almost as if you are wearing lead boots. "My feet are heavy. My feet are heavy." Just imagine this happening for a few seconds. Or, perhaps imagining heaviness in some other part of your body (e.g., arms, shoulders, or jaw) works for you.



### **Warm Hands**

Visualize your hands as warm and relaxed. You might imagine them in a bucket of warm water, near a fire, or in a warm pair of fleece gloves. Perhaps you can even begin to feel the warm blood flowing down into your hands down to your fingertips. Your hands are warm and relaxed.



### **Equalizing Breathing**

Take four seconds to breathe in and four seconds to breathe out. That is, as you inhale count: one . . . two . . . three . . . four. Do the same as you breathe out. Do this for four or five breath cycles. Avoid holding your breath after the inhalation or the exhalation, just smoothly transition from one phase to the other.



### **Your Relaxation Place**

Begin with a few relaxation breaths. Then with your eyes closed, take a moment to create in your mind's eye an ideal spot to relax. You can make it any place you'd like, such as the mountains, beach, lake, prairie, or park. It can be either a real or made-up place. See yourself comfortably enjoying this place. Now, once you have created it, go use it for 15 seconds or so whenever you feel the need to relax.



### **Shoulder Shrugs**

Raise your shoulders as if trying to touch your ears with them. Breathe in while doing this. Feel the muscles in your neck and shoulders tense. Then, all at once, let your shoulders drop while breathing out. Feel the tension leaving the muscles of your neck and shoulders. Repeat the shrug a few times, inhaling on the shrug and exhaling on the release. Keep your jaw relaxed as you do these.