
Exercises to help reduce stress

1. Slow breathing technique

- Sit with your feet flat on the floor. Put your hands in your lap. After you learn how to do the exercises, do them with your eyes closed. These exercises will help you to feel calm and relaxed. You can do them whenever you are stressed or anxious or cannot sleep.
- First, relax your body. Shake your arms and legs and let them go loose. Roll your shoulders back and move your head from side to side.
- Put your hands on your belly. Think about your breath.
- Slowly breathe out all the air through your mouth, and feel your belly flatten. Now breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, and feel your belly fill up like a balloon.
- Breathe deeply and slowly. You can count 1–2–3 on each breath in and 1–2–3 on each breath out.
- Keep breathing like this for about two minutes. As you breathe, feel the tension leave your body.

2. Progressive muscle relaxation technique

- In this exercise you tighten and then relax muscles in your body. Begin with your toes.
- Curl your toes and hold the muscles tightly. This may hurt a little. Breathe deeply and count to 3 while holding your toe muscles tight. Then, relax your toes and let out your breath. Breathe normally and feel the relaxation in your toes.

- Do the same for each of these parts of your body in turn. Each time, breathe deeply in as you tighten the muscles, count to 3, and then relax and breathe out slowly.
 - Hold your leg and thigh muscles tight...
 - Hold your belly tight...
 - Make fists with your hands...
 - Bend your arms at the elbows and hold your arms tight...
 - Squeeze your shoulder blades together...
 - Shrug your shoulders as high as you can...
 - Tighten all the muscles in your face....
- Now, drop your chin slowly toward your chest. As you breathe in, slowly and carefully move your head in a circle to the right, and then breathe out as you bring your head around to the left and back toward your chest. Do this 3 times. Now, go the other way...inhale to the left and back, exhale to the right and down. Do this 3 times.
- Now bring your head up to the centre. Notice how calm you feel.