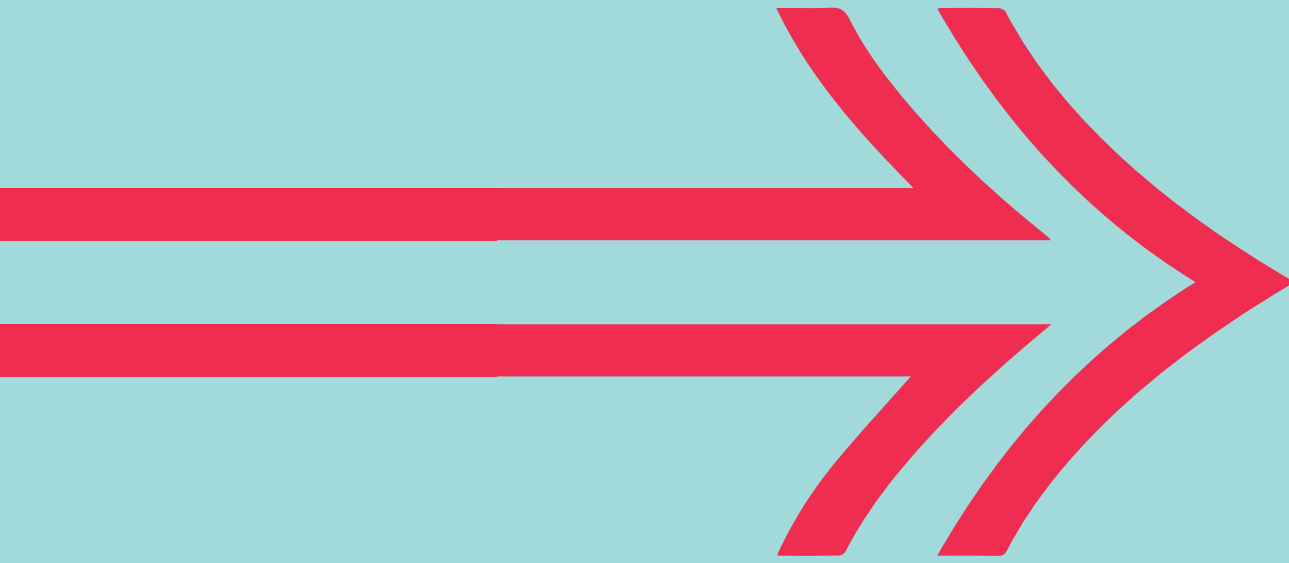


**QA**

**KEEP CALM  
& RELAX**



# RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

When a person is confronted with anxiety, their body undergoes several changes and enters a special state called the fight-or-flight response. The body prepares to either fight or flee the perceived danger.

During the fight-or-flight response it's common to experience a "blank" mind, increased heart rate, sweating, tense muscles, and more. Unfortunately, these bodily responses do little good when it comes to protecting us from modern sources of anxiety.

Using a variety of skills, you can end the fight-or-flight response before the symptoms become too extreme. These skills will require practice to work effectively, so don't wait until the last minute to try them out!

## Deep breathing

It's natural to take long, deep breaths, when relaxed. However, during the fight-or-flight response breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Deep breathing reverses that, and sends messages to the brain to begin calming the body. Practice will make your body respond more efficiently to deep breathing in the future.

You can sit cross-legged if that's comfortable or you can lie on your back with your knees raised or sit in a chair which supports your back.

Breathe in slowly. Count in your head and make sure the inward breath lasts at least 5 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of the air filling in your lungs.

Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds (again, keep count). You don't want to feel uncomfortable, but it should last quite a bit longer than an ordinary breath.

Breathe out very slowly for 5 to 10 seconds (count!). Pretend you're breathing through a straw to slow yourself down. Try using a real straw to practise.

Repeat the breathing process until you feel calm.

## Imagery

Think about some of your favourite places. If you think about the place hard enough - if you really try to think about what it's like - you may begin to have feelings you associate with that location. Our brain has the ability to create emotional

reactions based entirely on our thoughts. The imagery technique uses this to its advantage.

Either lie on your back with your knees raised or sit in a chair which supports your back.

Make sure you're somewhere quiet without too much noise or distraction. You'll need a few minutes just to spend quietly, in your mind.

Think of a place that's calming for you. Some examples are the beach, on a mountain, relaxing at home or playing with a pet.

Paint a picture of the calming place in your mind. Don't just think of the place briefly—imagine every little detail. Go through each of your senses and imagine what you would experience in your relaxing place. Here's an example using a beach:

- a. Sight: The sun is high in the sky and you're surrounded by white sand. There's no one else around. The water is a greenish-blue and waves are calmly rolling in from the ocean.*
- b. Sound: You can hear the deep pounding and splashing of the waves. There are seagulls somewhere in the background.*
- c. Touch: The sun is warm on your back, but a breeze cools you down just enough. You can feel sand moving between your toes.*
- d. Taste: You have a glass of lemonade that's sweet, tart, and refreshing.*
- e. Smell: You can smell the fresh ocean air, full of salt and calming aromas.*



## Progressive music relaxation

During the fight-or-flight response, the tension in our muscles increases. This can lead to a feeling of stiffness, or even back and neck pain. Progressive muscle relaxation teaches us to become more aware of this tension so we can better identify and address stress.

Find a private and quiet location. You should sit or lie down somewhere comfortable. The idea of this technique is to intentionally tense each muscle, and then to release the tension.

Let's start with your feet.

*a. Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.*

*b. Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your toes feel different after you release the tension.*

*c. Now tense the calf muscles. Hold for 5 seconds. Notice how the feeling of tension in your leg feels.*

*d. Release the tension and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.*

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing throughout your body. Move up through the thighs, buttocks, stomach, chest, arms, fingers, neck, ears and face.



# GET IN TOUCH



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