

The Connection Between Your Mind, Body and Health (Mind-body Connection)

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What you think affects the health of your body and the health of your body affects your thoughts. This is called the mind-body connection.

Your mind and body send messages back and forth to help you adjust to stress or change. Stress can affect you in different ways. In small amounts, stress can help you cope with tough situations but long-lasting (chronic) stress can interfere with your body's ability to keep your mind and body healthy.

How Your Mind and Body Can Work Together to Promote Health

There are some things you can do at home to decrease the effects of chronic stress and promote health and healing. This includes:

- **deep breathing:**
Deep breathing is a powerful and simple relaxation exercise. You can do this exercise for 1 to 2 minutes, several times a day.
 - Sit down comfortably or lie on your back in bed. Make sure your feet and hands are not crossed.
 - Begin to bring your thoughts and attention to your breath.
 - Feel where your breath comes in and goes out of your nose.
 - Put one hand on your stomach so you can feel it rise and fall with each breath.
- Breathe in deeply through your nose. Let your lungs fill completely and allow your belly to expand, moving your hand outward.
- Slowly breathe out through pursed lips. (Pursed lips are in the shape of blowing out a candle.)
- Try breathing out twice as long as you breathe in.
- Repeat several times in a slow, thoughtful manner.
- Continue for 1 to 2 minutes, noticing how you feel after.
- **exercise:**
Being physically active is a key to living a longer, healthier and happier life. Your body is meant to move. Try to exercise most days. It can help relieve stress and provide an overall feeling of well-being.
- **guided imagery:**
Imagery can help to relieve symptoms caused by or made worse by stress. You can create imagery by writing down a relaxing scene.
 - Include images of yourself becoming healthier, stronger and more successful.
 - Close your eyes.
 - Relax and imagine the details of your relaxing scene. Use all your senses as you imagine the scene you've created.
 - Repeat as often as you'd like.

(over)

■ **music:**

Listening to, or creating, music can help your physical, emotional and social well-being. Music can reduce your feelings of anxiety, stress and pain.

■ **progressive relaxation:**

Progressive relaxation is a short and easy exercise to help you relax.

- Find a relaxing position. You may sit down comfortably or lie on your back in bed. Be sure your legs and hands are not crossed.
- You may close your eyes or if you prefer, you can keep your eyes open, focusing on one spot in front of you.
- Bring your attention to your breathing. Think about where your breath comes in and out of your nose or mouth. Notice how your chest moves up and down with each breath.
- Imagine a gentle, safe wave of relaxation that will slowly and gently flow through your body. The wave can help you find those places in need of relaxation.
- You can imagine this wave in any way you find most comfortable. You may see it as light, water or just a feeling.
- Allow each out breath to move the wave through your body.
- If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breathing.
- Practice for 2 to 10 minutes or until you feel relaxed.

The Penny George™ Institute for Health and Healing offers therapies to help promote health and healing. This includes:

- acupuncture
- aromatherapy
- biofeedback therapy
- integrative nutrition
- massage
- traditional Chinese medicine.

Ask your health care provider if these therapies are offered at your hospital.

Whom to Call With Questions

Talk with your health care provider if you have questions.