

The Relaxation Response

How to Use the Relaxation Response

1. Sit or lie quietly in a comfortable position.
2. Choose a word that helps you feel relaxed (for example, peace, ocean or love).
3. Close your eyes. (If this is not comfortable for you, focus on a point on the floor or wall in front of you.)
4. With each breath out, relax all of your muscles by imagining a wave of calmness starting on the top of your head, moving down to your forehead, face, neck, shoulders, arms and hands, then down your chest and back, hips, thighs, legs, feet and toes.
5. Become aware of your breathing, focusing on your breath as it moves in and out through your nose.
6. Breathe in, then with each breath out say your chosen word silently to yourself.
7. When you notice your mind wandering, gently bring your focus back to breathing, saying your chosen word each time you breathe out.
8. Try to practice for up to 10 minutes, knowing that even 1 or 2 minutes can be effective. Practice twice or more each day if possible, especially during times when you are stressed, worried, or feeling pain or anxiety.

Whom to Call With Questions

Talk with your health care provider if you have questions.

Adapted from the book “The Relaxation Response,” by Dr. Herbert Benson.