

Relaxation Techniques to help Manage Stress

There are a variety of relaxation techniques that can help you manage stress at college, and also improve your concentration, productivity and overall wellbeing.

Before you start:

- **Find a quiet, relaxing place**, where you will be alone for 10-20 minutes to do these exercises.
- **Practice** once or twice a day
- Strick with the technique that **works best for you**. Not every technique will work best for every person.
- **Keep trying**. Don't worry if you don't notice a major change immediately. You may need to practice for a few weeks before you begin to feel the benefits.

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique can help you relax the major muscle groups in your body.

- i. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Sit in a favourite chair or lie down.
- ii. Begin with your facial muscles. Frown hard for 5-10 seconds and then relax all your muscles.
- iii. Work other facial muscles by scrunching your face up or knitting your eyebrows for 5-10 seconds. Release. You should feel a noticeable difference between the tense and relaxed muscles.
- iv. Move on to your jaw. Then, move on to other muscle groups- shoulders, arms, chest, legs, etc.- until you've tensed and relaxed individual muscle groups throughout your whole body.

Muscular Relaxation during an Exam

- i. Pull in stomach muscles tightly, hold for a count of 5 and then, release and relax.
- ii. Clench fists tightly; hold; relax.
- iii. Extend fingers; hold; relax.
- iv. Grasps below seat of chair, pull up; hold; relax.
- v. Press elbows tightly into the side of body; hold; relax.
- vi. Push feet hard on floor; hold; relax.
- vii. Relax briefly with dangling arms, or resting head in arms, on desk.

2. Meditation

This is the process of focusing on a single word or object to clear your mind. As a result, you feel calm and refreshed.

- i. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Sit or lie in a relaxing position.
- ii. Close your eyes and concentrate on a calming thought, word or object.
- iii. You may find that other thoughts pop into your mind. Don't worry, this is normal. Try not to dwell on them. Just keep focusing on your image or sound.
- iv. If you're having trouble, try repeating a word or sound over and over. (Some people find it helpful to play soothing music while meditating).
- v. Gradually, you'll begin to feel more and more relaxed.

3. Visualisation

This technique uses imagination, a great resource when it comes to reducing stress.

- i. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- ii. Imagine a pleasant, peaceful scene, such as lush forest or a sandy beach. Picture yourself in this setting.
- iii. Focus on the scene for a set amount of time (any amount of time you are comfortable with), then gradually return to the present.

4. Deep Breathing

One of the easiest ways to relieve tension is deep breathing.

- i. Lie on your back with a pillow under your head. Bend your knees (or put a pillow under them) to relax your stomach.
- ii. Put one hand on your stomach, just below your rib cage.
- iii. Slowly breathe in through your nose. Your stomach should feel like it's rising.
- iv. Exhale slowly through your mouth, empty your lungs completely, letting your stomach fall.
- v. Repeat several times until you feel calm and relaxed. Practice daily.