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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Make it happy – *RELAX*

June 2014 Newsletter

How to unwind in 10 minutes or less

Have you ever tried relaxing to slow, soothing words? Here's a script to help you try it... **More...**

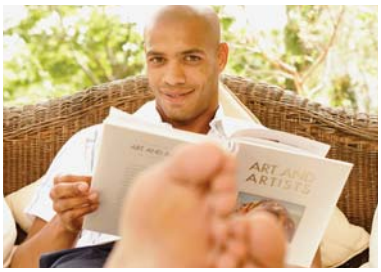
Slowing down to smell the roses

Do you often catch yourself rushing through everyday tasks? Try this quiz to see if you might be adding to your stress by racing through life... **More...**

Do you live in a state of relaxation?

For the 5th year in a row, Hawaii topped the list of the most relaxed states in the U.S. The next four were... **More...**

e-Thoughts - What's your relaxation?



For some people, relaxing can mean stretching out on the couch. For others, it might be running in a race. Is one right and the other wrong? **More...**

Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

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How to unwind in 10 minutes or less

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Have you ever tried relaxing to slow, soothing words? Below, you'll find a script to help you do just that.

Ways to use the script

Get to know the directions in the script. Soon you'll be able to relax on your own just by going through the steps in your mind. Or, record yourself reading the script. Then play the recording when you want to take a timeout.

You can also ask a friend to read the words to you while you relax. Then you can switch roles.

Relaxation script

Here's the script. Give it a try and see if you enjoy the benefits of relaxation. Remember: It needs to be read at a slow, calming pace.

You may want to set an alarm or timer so you don't have to look at a clock while you're trying to relax.

Start reading here:

Find a quiet spot and sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes.

Begin by breathing deeply, drawing air in... deep into your lungs... and letting the breath out slowly....
Breathe in....2....3....4... Hold...2....3.... Exhale....2....3....4....5...
Again....2....3....4.... Pause....2....3.... Exhale....2....3....4....5....
(Continue taking slow, regular breaths.)

Now turn your attention to your right hand. Feel the skin on the palm of your right hand becoming warm and relaxed. Feel the warmth in each finger.... and on your palm....spreading to the back of your hand.... to your wrist.... feel your right arm becoming warm..... Your right arm is starting to feel very heavy.... and very relaxed. Your right arm is warm, heavy and relaxed.

Now focus on your left hand. Picture placing your left hand into soothing, warm water. Feel the warmth relaxing your hand. Let your wrist enter the warm, calming water..... and relax. Your arm is becoming heavy. Allow your left arm to sink into the warm water. Your left arm feels warm, heavy and relaxed.

Now turn your attention to your legs. Feel your legs becoming warm. Feel the warmth spreading all the way from your feet.... to your ankles.... lower legs....knees....and hips. Feel your legs becoming heavy.... very heavy and very relaxed.

Your legs are warm....heavy.....and relaxed.... Imagine a warm breeze blowing across your face.... feel your face and head relaxing....

Picture the sun shining down on you....warming the front of your body..... allow your chest and stomach to relax in this warmth.... feel the sun shining....warming your skin....relaxing your body.... as your body is filled with heavy, warm, pleasant relaxation.

Your whole body is warm....heavy.... and relaxed... Notice your smooth, even breathing....relaxed and deep....drawing you even deeper into relaxation.... Your body feels very heavy....warm....and relaxed....

(Enjoy the relaxation for a few more moments...)

Now slowly begin to bring your attention back to the present..... notice the surface you're lying or sitting on.... hear the sounds in your environment.....

Gently start to reawaken your body.... wiggle your fingers and toes....move your arms and legs a little.... stretch if you like.... When you're ready, open your eyes.... and become fully alert.

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Slowing down to smell the roses

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Do you often catch yourself rushing or even holding your breath as you go through everyday tasks? Try this short quiz to see if you might be adding to your stress by racing through life:

1) Do you check the time often during the day?
2) When people take too long to get to the point, do you feel like interrupting and hurrying them along?
3) Are you often the first person to finish at mealtimes?
4) When walking along a street, do you feel stuck if you're behind slower walkers?
5) Do you become irritable if you have to wait in line?
6) Do you leave restaurants or shops if there's even a short wait?
7) If you're caught in slow-moving traffic, do you get more annoyed than other drivers?

If you answered "yes" to 5 or more questions, it may be time to put your foot on the brake and s-l-o-w d-o-w-n.

Let go of hurry and worry

Spending your life in a rush isn't good for you. It adds stress, can increase blood pressure and decreases your day-to-day enjoyment. It can lower your immune system so you're more vulnerable to illness. It can even impact your ability to focus on your tasks and do a good job.

So what are some ways to slow down and de-stress? Here are some easy tips:[1]

1) **Visit Mother Nature.** Spend just 30 minutes each day in green surroundings. Being outdoors increases your intake of sunlight which can boost your immune system and help you sleep better. Relaxing in a natural setting for even a few minutes can lower anxiety.
2) **Listen to soothing sounds.** Easy listening music, relaxation recordings or sounds of nature can all lower stress.
3) **Do relaxation exercises.** See the article in this month's newsletter that has a relaxation script for you to use. Consider learning to meditate or do yoga.
4) **Spend time with friends.** Being with people keeps your mind off anxious thoughts and lifts your mood.
5) **Help others.** Even small acts of kindness — like helping an older adult or making a donation to charity — can make you feel happier.
6) **Accept what you can't change.** Try not to dwell on the past or obsess about things you can't change. Instead, focus on how you can create a better present and future.
7) **Act happier.** The act of smiling can make you happier. Even if you don't feel like it, put a smile on your face and you'll feel cheerier. Others will usually smile back at you, too. After a while, you actually do feel happier!
8) **Use lavender.** Many people find the smell of lavender soothing. Used in the bedroom, it can help you get a good night's sleep.
9) **Hit the gym.** Exercise promotes the production of endorphins, which, in turn, make you feel better about yourself and more relaxed.
10) **Give thanks.** Gratitude increases your well-being. And it helps you enjoy all the good things you already have.

[1]www.sciencedaily.com

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Do you live in a state of relaxation?

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If you want to chill out, you might consider packing your surfboard and heading for Hawaii. For the fifth year in a row, Hawaii topped the list of the most relaxed states in the U.S.[1] The next four, in order, were Louisiana, Mississippi, Iowa and Wyoming.

And which were the least relaxed? West Virginia, Rhode Island, Kentucky, Utah and Massachusetts. So what makes a state rank as more — or less — relaxed?

Measuring relaxation

Gallup first started polling states to identify the most and least relaxed in 2008. Here's a quick look at how the survey works:

- Participants across the U.S. are asked if they "felt a lot of stress yesterday." In the most recent poll, only 32% of Hawaiians said "yes," while 40.6% of other Americans said "yes."
- Next, they're asked if they had "a lot of enjoyment yesterday." Hawaiians said "yes" 89.7% of the time!
- Residents of the most relaxed states also score well on questions about work satisfaction, good health and whether or not they felt worried on the previous day.

Wait: Don't pull up stakes yet!

No matter where you live, you can learn a lot about how to relax from this survey.

- **First, try to build enjoyment into each day.** Spend time with family, call a friend or play with your pet. Whatever works for you.
- **Next, think about your job.** Do you feel productive, appreciated and challenged? If not, think about what you can do to increase your satisfaction. Try to enlist support from your manager or team.
- **Pay attention to your fitness and health goals.** It's hard to enjoy a good quality of life without taking care of your mind and body.
- **Finally, if you're a worrier, try to get it under control.** Make a list of things you're concerned about. Then devote 10 minutes a day to worrying about the items on your list. After that, force yourself to stop. The list will still be there for tomorrow's worry time!

You can find help with taking all these steps by searching online for stress, health and wellness tools. Or you can learn about health and wellness benefits you may have through your Human Resources department.

[1]**www.gallup.com**

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e-Thoughts - *What's your relaxation?*

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Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.

Relaxation is a unique and personal thing. For some, relaxing can mean stretching out on the couch and taking a nap. For others, it might be running in a physically demanding race. Is one right and the other wrong?

Not at all. What relaxes me may be totally different from what relaxes you. The point is to make time to do whatever it is.

I take relaxation timeouts once or twice a day. They only take a few minutes.

I try to let go of whatever I was thinking about or doing beforehand. I put aside thoughts of what I plan to do later. In other words, I "empty" my mind as much as possible. I focus on my breathing and letting my muscles release tension.

Afterward, I feel recharged and ready to take on the rest of my day. So do yourself a favor and make relaxation breaks a part of your everyday routine. I bet you'll feel recharged too!

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