

The world is stressful, but we don't have to be stressed.

One way to beat stress is to take a mental vacation by practicing relaxation exercises. Inside this brochure you will find some brief relaxation exercises that you can use anytime during the day: at work, in between classes, before a presentation or speech, prior to a big date or an appointment, while using public transportation or while waiting. Go ahead - take a moment to try. You will be more focused and at peace. You deserve it.

Alexandria Community Services Board

- 24-hour emergency crisis intervention services
- 24-hour detoxification services
- Evaluation and assessment
- Individual, family and group counseling
- Day support and vocational services
- Residential services
- Inpatient services
- Prevention and early intervention services
- Service fees are based on ability to pay or without charge
- Multi-language availability

The Alexandria Community Services Board is a group of 16 citizen volunteers appointed by Alexandria's City Council. The CSB oversees the city's publicly funded services for mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse.

It is a CSB policy not to discriminate in the admission to its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, sex, handicap, religion or national or ethnic origins. Programs and activities are accessible to people with physically handicapping conditions. If you require accommodations please call (703) 838-4455 or TDD (703) 838-5054.

B-MEN-0154



Relaxation Techniques



Department of Mental Health,
Mental Retardation and
Substance Abuse



(703) 838-6400
24 hours a day
TDD: (703) 838-5054

www.alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa

BRIEF RELAXATION EXERCISES

For all of these exercises, it is best to be seated, eyes closed, feet flat on the floor or crossed at the ankles, and hands resting comfortably in your lap. Begin each exercise by taking a deep breath then gently exhaling. As you release the air, feel yourself beginning to relax already. After doing each exercise, slowly and gently activate by breathing a little more deeply, wiggling your fingers and toes, and opening your eyes at your own rate.

FOCUS ON A WORD:

Pick a word that you associate with “good vibrations”. A word you associate with relaxation. Now, slowly silently repeat the word over and over to yourself for five minutes. Don’t think about anything else but that word. Your mind will drift to other things, but that’s okay. When it does, gently go back to focusing on the word.



TENSE & RELAX: Clench your fists. While keeping them clenched, pull your forearms tightly up against your upper arms. While keeping those muscles tense, tense all of the muscles in you legs. While keeping all those tense, clench your jaws and shut your eyes fairly tight...not too tightly. Now while holding all those muscles tense, take a deep breath and hold it for five seconds. Then, let everything go all at once. Feel yourself letting go of all your tensions.

A FAVORITE PLACE, SCENE OR PERSON: As you’re sitting quietly, recall the most relaxing thought you can. Perhaps it’s a favorite place, a vacation spot or a person with whom you feel at peace. Take a few seconds to get the image in your mind. Now, focus on the image for five minutes. Feel those good feelings you have when you are in that place. If your thoughts wander, just take them gently back to that peaceful, relaxing place.



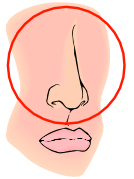
BREATHING YOUR BODY AWAY:

Focus on your feet and legs. Be aware of all the sensations from your feet and legs. Now, inhale a long, slow breath, and as you do, breathe in all the sensations from your feet and legs. In your mind’s eye, imagine that you are erasing this part of your body. As you exhale, breathe out all those sensations. Now, with another long breath, breathe in all the parts of your body, and as you exhale, breathe it away. Beginning with your fingers, breathe in your fingers, hands, wrists and arms, and exhale them away. Now, your neck and head. As you breathe in, imagine your neck and head being erased and, now, breathe them away. Go back over the whole body, beginning with the feet. As you do, erase any little parts that still remain. Then sit quietly and enjoy feeling yourself relax deeper and deeper.



HEAVINESS & WARMTH: Imagine that your feet and legs are getting heavier and heavier and warmer and warmer, like you’re wearing lead boots. Now, imagine your stomach and the whole central portion of your body getting warm and relaxed. Your forehead is cool and relaxed. And your breathing is easy and regular. Feel the warmth and heaviness spread all over the body.

COOL AIR IN, WARM AIR OUT: With your eyes closed, gently focus on the end of your nose. As you breathe in, feel the air coming in the tip of your nose. As you breathe out, feel the air coming out the tip of your nose. Notice that the air coming in is cooler than the air going out. As your attention wanders, gently bring it back to the tip of your nose.



The Nose

SOMETHING FOR USE ANYWHERE: With practice, you will become more adept at relaxing. When you do, here’s a way to let yourself relax while doing anything. You may be walking, working, taking a test, etc. First, gently smile. Then, take a long, deep breath, and let it out. Now, take a second long deep breath, and as you let it out, feel yourself releasing the tensions in your mind and in your body.