

Relaxation

How to use relaxation exercises

You can use these exercises when you're feeling stressed, busy or worried. Don't worry if one technique doesn't work for you – try it a few times and, if it doesn't feel effective, move on to a different exercise.

- You can use relaxation techniques regularly, or every once in a while.
- Try and make some time in your day to try these exercises. Don't treat relaxing like a task that needs to be completed – try to think of it as giving yourself some time and space.
- Find somewhere quiet and comfortable where you won't be interrupted, if you can.
- Make sure your surroundings are the right temperature – it can be hard to relax if you're too hot or cold.

Relax your body

How will this help?

When you're stressed, your muscles might be tight and tense. This exercise helps you notice tension in your body and relax your muscles.

What do I need?

- somewhere comfortable to sit or lie down
- space where you won't be interrupted

What do I do?

Lie down or sit with your back straight and your feet on the floor.

Close your eyes or focus on a spot in the distance.

Start by clenching your toes as much as you can for a few seconds then releasing them. Notice the difference between the two feelings.

Match this to your breathing.

Tense your muscles as you take a deep breath in, and relax as you breathe out.

Move up your body, clenching and relaxing each muscle. Take time to notice any parts of your body that feel tense, tight or tired.

You can repeat if you still feel tense.

Take a moment to relax, then slowly and gently begin to move. When you feel ready, you can stand up slowly.

Alternatives

- Instead of tensing your muscles, try placing something warm on each part of your body in turn.



Get creative

How will this help?

Colour, creativity and movement can help you feel relaxed by distracting you from worrying thoughts, giving you an outlet and focus for your emotions and stimulating your senses.

What do I need?

- a table or desk
- some blank paper
- some crayons, coloured pencils or pens
- some sticky tape or masking tape to hold your paper down (optional)

What do I do?

Make sure you are sitting comfortably with your feet firmly on the floor, your back straight and your shoulders relaxed.

Take your paper and crayon, and draw a circle that fills most of the page – don't worry if it's a bit wonky!

Now keep drawing. You could keep going over the circle, or fill it with a pattern, but try not to let your crayon leave the page. Don't worry about creating a finished picture, just keep going.

Take time to focus on what you're drawing.

Focusing on these sensations can help you quieten your mind, like meditation.

Once you have done this for a few minutes, try using a different colour or pattern.

Alternatives

- If you're focusing too much on getting the pattern right, try using your other hand.
- If you find it hard to get started, try using a colouring book.

For more ideas about how to relax, go to Mind's website:
mind.org.uk/relaxation

