

Learning to Relax

Most people can gauge how much stress they're under by the amount of physical and emotional tension they feel. Too much tension can be unhealthy as well as uncomfortable, which is why relaxation is so important. Relaxation provides a way for you to reduce some of the tensions developed as a result of stress—which in turn helps you to function more efficiently.

One of the ways the body copes with the effects of stress is by "powering down" every night when you sleep. During sleep, your body become very relaxed and your heart rate, pulse, respiration, blood pressure, and body temperature decrease. This gives your body and mind a chance to renew themselves and allows you to face the next day's stress with a fresh supply of physical and mental vigor. While relaxation isn't sleep, of course, it does produce many of the same benefits of a good night's sleep:

- Decreased muscle tension
- Lowered blood pressure
- Increased energy
- Improved immune-system functioning
- Reduced edginess or irritability
- Improved concentration



In effect, relaxation does the opposite of what stress does, giving the body a break and helping to counteract many of the long- and short-term physical problems that stress can produce. Relaxation can also be a powerful tool in managing pain. It can help to reduce the muscle tension that often accompanies injury or illness, and can provide a distraction from pain and worry. Finally, even a brief relaxation exercise can provide a quick energy boost or give you a time-out from concentrating on a difficult problem or project. Often, when you return to a challenging problem after a short relaxation break, you're able to focus better and generate new solutions.

Relaxation Tips

Practice

Learning to relax is like learning to play golf: It takes practice to relax, especially if you're used to being under a great deal of stress.

**This month's
Online Webinar
Discussion:**

BFF

**Self-Care: Remaining
Resilient**

Learn to identify ongoing symptoms of stress and how to find a healthy approach to the demands of work and home.

**ONLINE SEMINAR
Available on demand
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CARE's Employee Assistance Program can provide guidance, information, and resources to help you remain healthy and resilient.

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Life Happens. We Can Help.

Understand relaxation is part of a healthy life.

Relaxation may sound like another term for goofing off, but it can be beneficial to your health. Research shows relaxation training can help alleviate the symptoms associated with many medical and psychological disorders, including

- High blood pressure
- Chronic and acute pain
- Nausea, vomiting
- Asthma and allergies
- Addiction
- Diabetes
- Insomnia
- Muscle spasms
- Headaches
- Anxiety and phobias
- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

Relax and enjoy life.

Once mastered, many of the benefits of relaxation can be enjoyed with only 15 to 20 minutes of practice per day. If meditation is a part of your relaxation skills, some believe you may enjoy increased longevity and quality of life.

When should you relax?

Any time you're thinking about relaxation, your body is probably sending you a signal that stress is starting to take a toll. You may want to take a relaxation break whenever you become aware of any of the following stress-related symptoms: Fatigue, Decreased concentration, Stiff or aching muscles, Increased irritability or impatience, or Headache.

If you are concerned about your stress level, and you feel it might be interfering with your health, productivity, or relationships, contact CARE's WorkLife Solutions at 1-866-888-1555. We're Here to Help!