

The aim of relaxation

Relaxation can take many forms, reading a book, working on a hobby, going for a walk, are all recognised methods to help us relax.

Sometimes, however, it is good to find some time allow your body to relax as well as your mind and for you to enjoy the feeling of muscles letting go of their tension.

Learning how your body feels when it is relaxed can help you to recognize the first physical signs of stress and by acting quickly stop them escalating to a level that may cause pain.

The routine over leaf can be adapted to an order that suits you.

Regular practice will allow you to master the technique, and then adapt it to suit your life - a quick change in position of your shoulders plus a stretch of your jaw may help relieve tension while driving.

There are many times in our lives when we will feel stressed.

This maybe a physical stress, such as pain from an injury or illness, or emotional stress from emotional events. Sometimes stress can be lead to a positive reaction that allows us to work through our problems, i.e. focusing on revision. However, sometimes the physical symptoms of the stress can cause us to feel unwell and unable to cope.

The flight or fight response is how the body reacts to stressful events, getting it ready to run or fight by increasing our respiratory rate and heart rate and increasing muscle tension. Our nervous system also gets involved which can leave us feeling exhausted and unable to make decisions easily. It may well disturb our sleep patterns, further adding to our feelings of tiredness.

Physical Signs of Tension

There are many ways your body may reflect tension, including

- Hunched posture
- Frowning
- Jaw clenching or teeth grinding
- Tightly crossed legs
- Hands clenched into a fist
- Altered breathing pattern
 - Shallow
 - Rapid
 - Breath-holding



Relaxation

The Laura Mitchell Relaxation Technique.

A structured series of exercises to help you learn how to recognize the physical symptoms of stress and how to ease them.

There are many forms of Relaxation and different types work for different people.

The Physiotherapy for Breathing Pattern Disorder Group feel the Laura Mitchell Method is effective as it reflects our advice on maintaining a good breathing pattern

The sequence for each part of your body is: **move** away from the position of stress, **stop** the movement, **feel** and be aware of the new(relaxed) position.
Below is a suggested order but you can alter this to suit your body.

With a little practice relaxation can be used by everyone, wherever they are, giving a feeling of control over runaway symptoms or feelings.

You can practice relaxation in many positions once you have learnt the basics, but to begin with it is advisable to lie on your back, with pillows under your head and maybe your legs ensuring you are comfortable, if you are unable to lie down, try sitting in a chair with your back and knees supported.

Breathing

Breathe gently through your nose keeping your upper chest relaxed.

Each time you breathe out allow your body to let go a little more until your muscles feel heavy

Take time to check your breathing after every movement and ensure you are maintaining a gentle pattern and not breath holding.

Arms and Legs

Shoulders

Pull your shoulders down to your feet
Stop
Feel the new position
and breathe

Elbows

Slide your elbows away from your body
Stop
Feel the new position
and breathe

Hands

Stretch your fingers and thumbs out
Stop
Feel the new position
and breathe

Hips

Turn your hips outwards, rolling knees away from each other
Stop
Feel the new position

Feet and Ankles

Push your feet away from your head, pointing your toes gently
Stop
Feel the new position
and breathe

Head and Body

Body

Push your body into the bed(or chair) along the length of your spine.
Stop
Feel the new position
and breathe

Head

Push your head back into the pillow
Stop
Feel the new position
and breathe

Mouth and Jaw

With your lips closed stretch your lower jaw down (as if yawning)
Stop
Feel the new position
Ensure tongue is not pushed up into the roof of your mouth but resting in lower jaw.
and breathe

Eyes

Close your eyes, press your top lid into the bottom lid
Stop
Feel the new position
and breathe

Forehead

Raise your eyebrows towards your hairline
Stop
Feel the new position
and breathe