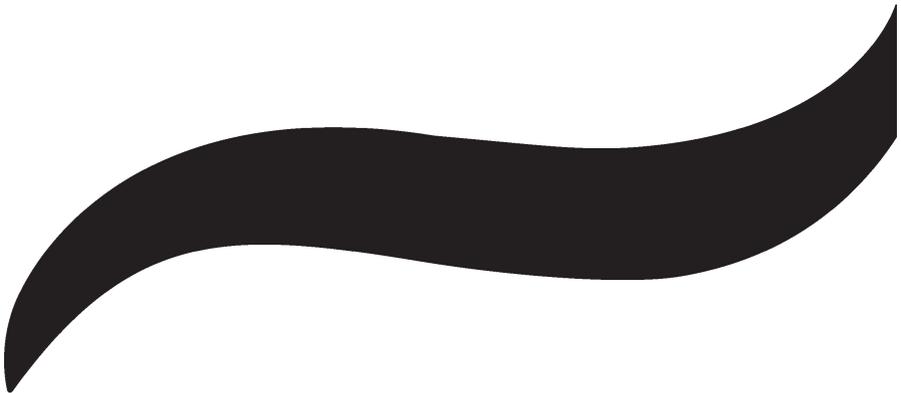


# Relaxation

Information for clients



## **WHY IS RELAXATION HELPFUL?**

- ❖ When we are stressed, our muscles tense up. This tension causes uncomfortable bodily feelings such as headaches and backache.
- ❖ The aches and pains of tension can cause worry, making us even more anxious and tense.
- ❖ When we are tense/anxious our body system speeds up - relaxation slows us down again.
- ❖ If we can learn to turn on the bodily feelings of relaxation we can turn off the symptoms of tension. You can't experience relaxation and tension at the same time.

## **EVERYDAY RELAXATION**

It is a good idea to try and change your day-to-day activities in such a way as to include something relaxing every day. It is helpful to try and set aside some time every day for relaxing and unwinding. If possible this should be for a minimum of 30 minutes a day. If you live with other people you might need to train them gradually to accept that you would like to be left alone at certain times each day. For some people just managing to have 30 minutes on their own every day can make a great deal of difference.

There are a number of things you can do that you might find relaxing. You might have to experiment to see which has the most relaxing effect on you. Why not try some of these suggestions and see what effect they have on you. There may well be some other ideas that suit you better. Try them and see what is best for you.

Relaxing activities, some suggestions:

- ❖ Have a long hot bath - maybe try some aromatherapy oils in it (see page six)
- ❖ Read an easy book
- ❖ Listen to some soft music
- ❖ Lie on your bed and imagine spending a million pounds
- ❖ Yoga
- ❖ Go for a walk
- ❖ Swim
- ❖ Cycle

## **EXERCISE**

Physical effort helps to reduce anxiety by using up some of the build up of adrenalin stress hormones. Exercise can therefore make you feel better.

## **RELAXATION EXERCISES**

These everyday activities can help you feel less tense, but learning to fully relax your muscles will help you more. The following pages explain how to use the relaxation CD/tape. Try it and see how you get on.

# USING THE RELAXATION CD/TAPE

## Relaxation is a skill and comes with practice.

The ability to relax is not something that comes naturally; it is a skill that has to be learned. The secret of learning any skill is practice, and relaxation is no exception. It is important to practise the exercises on the CD/tape regularly. You should not expect to be able to relax completely when you first start listening to the CD/tape. Gradual progress over a number of days is a more realistic aim. Some people find that they feel silly when they first start doing the exercises. However, they soon get used to it and find them helpful in the long run.

## General guidelines:

- ❖ Try to decide in advance when and where you are going to practise; in this way you can develop a routine you are more likely to stick to. Make time for yourself.
- ❖ Make sure that you choose somewhere quiet and that no one will disturb you during practice. You could unplug the phone.
- ❖ Don't attempt the exercises if you are hungry. If you have just eaten, leave it for at least 30 minutes before attempting them.
- ❖ Don't attempt the exercises if the room is too hot or too chilly.
- ❖ Try to adopt a passive attitude; don't worry about your performance or whether you are relaxing successfully. Just have a go and let it happen.

## Getting started:

In order to use the CD/tape effectively, you should

- ❖ Sit in a comfortable chair or lie in a quiet room, possibly with the lights off or on very low.
- ❖ Make yourself as comfortable and relaxed as possible before you start to listen to the CD/tape.
- ❖ Listen to the instructions on the CD/tape and follow them step by step.

## What is on the CD/tape?

You will hear a woman's voice and three different relaxation exercises.

- Exercise 1.** This exercise focuses on the different muscles in your body and asks you to tense them and then relax them one at a time. It lasts about 15 minutes.
- Exercise 2.** This talks you through deep breathing by asking you to take long, slow breaths. It lasts about five minutes.
- Exercise 3.** This asks you to imagine that you are on a holiday and talks you through a variety of different relaxing scenes. It lasts about eight minutes.

## How to finish:

When you have listened through the CD/tape, continue lying as relaxed as you can for five or ten minutes. Take advantage of the relaxed feeling and try to think pleasant thoughts. When you get up, do so slowly. Do not jump up and rush off, as this will undo all the relaxation that you have just worked on.

## Keep Practising Your Cd/Tape. Try To Practise Every Day.

When you are used to the exercises and feel comfortable about them, read section two of this booklet.

## **SECTION TWO - USING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED**

### **Shortened relaxation**

If you have been doing Exercise One and feel confident, you can begin to shorten it by missing out the ‘tense’ stage. You can simply go through the sequence of relaxing the different muscle groups. When you feel that you can do this effectively, you can adapt the routine to use at other times and other places. For example, you might try the exercise sitting instead of lying down; or you might move from a quiet bedroom to the living area, which is not so peaceful. In this way you will gradually learn to relax in a range of environments, which is what you need for real-life coping.

### **Cued relaxation**

**When you are able to use the shortened relaxation you can begin to use your relaxation skills throughout the day and not just at your designated “relaxation time.” In this way, you will progress towards being able to relax at will. All you need for cued relaxation is something that will catch your eye regularly and remind you to:**

- ❖ Change your posture to a relaxed one. Drop your shoulders
- ❖ Release the tension in your muscles
- ❖ Check your breathing
- ❖ Relax

As a cue, or reminder, you could use a small, coloured spot on your watch or something else you look at regularly during the day. Every time you see the cue, you will be reminded to relax and so you will be practising your relaxation skills several times a day. There are all sorts of cues you might use. Work out what catches your eye frequently and use this as a reminder.

## Applied relaxation

The final stage of relaxation training is its application whenever you need to use it. With time and regular practice, relaxation will become a way of life and you will be able to relax at will. From time to time you will probably still feel some tension, which is normal, but now you will have a better awareness of it and the skills to bring it under your control.

### **SUMMARY**

#### A final word

Relaxing is about slowing things down. Everyone is different - experiment until you find your best way to relax.

Ten minutes 'out' of a busy day is a good investment for your health and well-being.

## **BREATHING EXERCISES**

If you start to feel yourself becoming stressed or anxious, controlling your breathing can be a very good way to make you feel calmer. Nobody will notice you are doing this exercise. You can use it anywhere, even in busy shops, on buses and when you are with other people.

**Step 1. breathe out**

**Step 2. breathe in slowly** to the count of four, 'one elephant, two elephant, three elephant, four elephant'

**Step 3. hold your breath** for the count of four

**Step 4. breathe out slowly** while counting elephants

Repeat the above steps until you begin to feel calm.

Remember, don't take too many deep breaths in a row or breathe too quickly, or you will become dizzy.

Take a few ordinary breaths in between the deep ones.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

### Useful Contacts

For information on mental services, supports, opportunities or self-help information call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133

For further information on mental health and well-being, visit Lanarkshire's Elament website: [www.elament.org.uk](http://www.elament.org.uk)

Remember, should your problems persist or you feel you need help urgently please contact your GP. The following organisations can also prove useful in and out of hours.

- ❖ **Breathing Space** - 0800 83 85 87  
(Mon - Thu, 6pm - 2am; Fri 6pm - Mon 6am)  
[www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk)
- ❖ **Samaritans** - 116 123 (24hrs) [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- ❖ **NHS24** - 111 (Out of hours) [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com)
- ❖ **Healthy Working Lives** - 08452 300 323 (Local),  
0800 019 2211 (National),  
[www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com)
- ❖ **Childline** - 0800 11 11 (24hrs) [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- ❖ **NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88 [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)
- ❖ **Parentline Scotland** - 0808 800 22 22  
[www.children1st.org.uk/parentline](http://www.children1st.org.uk/parentline)
- ❖ **National Debt Line Scotland** - 0808 808 4000  
[www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland)
- ❖ **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** - 0800 027 1234

## WHAT IS WELL CONNECTED?

Well Connected is a new programme in Lanarkshire, sometimes referred to as social prescribing or community referral. It makes it easier for us and people we know to take part in and benefit from activities and services that we know improve our well-being which means how we feel about ourselves and our lives. There are a number of Well Connected areas available to us and we can benefit from more than one:

- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Arts and culture
- ❖ Benefits, welfare and debt advice
- ❖ Learning opportunities
- ❖ Stress Control Classes in communities
- ❖ Health Walks
- ❖ Mindfulness Classes.

For information on any of the above call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133
- ❖ Visit: [www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx](http://www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx)

## HEALTHY READING

All public libraries have a healthy reading section making it easier to access mental health and well-being leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support. All libraries across Lanarkshire have resources to help us get the most from life such as living life to the full, sleeping better and becoming more confident or overcoming and coping with mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, dementia and panic. There are also resources for all ages including supporting young people, adults and older people as well as items on positive parenting. Simply pop into your local library.

## GUIDED SUPPORT:

### Stress Control Classes

Stress Control classes will help develop skills and techniques to manage common issues caused by modern day living such as stress, anxiety or low confidence.

The classes are delivered in local community facilities and consist of six sessions lasting 90 minutes each. We will not need to speak about our issues during the class. Just sit back and listen about helpful stress control techniques. Feel free to bring someone along with you for support. To find your nearest class and book a place, call **0300 303 0447**.

### Living Life to the Full - Online Course

Living Life to The Full is a free web-based life skills course that aims to help us tackle and respond to issues/demands which we all meet in our everyday lives. It will explore issues such as understanding why we feel the way we do, problem solving, noticing and challenging unhelpful thoughts and behaviours and anxiety control. You can register for the course at **[www.lltff.com](http://www.lltff.com)** and complete as many or as few modules as you wish.

If you feel you need additional help, the Living Life to The Full course is also available with support from self help coaches (via Action on Depression Scotland). To find out more visit **[www.aod.lltffionline.co.uk](http://www.aod.lltffionline.co.uk)**

### Living Life: Guided Self Help and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Telephone Support

Living Life is a free telephone support service for people suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression, symptoms of anxiety or a combination of both. Trained Self-help coaches and therapists will guide us through a range of workbooks over a series of telephone sessions. For more information or to make a telephone appointment, call **0800 328 9655** (Mon–Fri 1–9pm).

**NHS Lanarkshire** - for local services and the latest health news visit [www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk)  
NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line: 0300 3030 243

**NHS inform** - The national health information service for Scotland. [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)  
Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line on 0300 3030 243 or e-mail [info2@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:info2@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)



[www.patientopinion.org.uk](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk)

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