

PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION

CONTRAST METHOD

Tightening a muscle group followed by relaxation of that muscle group.

Select a quiet room which may or may not be dark. Remove shoes. Clothing should be loose and comfortable (eg. loosen belt or waistband and collar - remove glasses if worn.) Lie on your back, arms by your side, a pillow under the knees, a small pillow supporting your head.

FIRST Stretch out (by stretching toes and feet up towards chest - lifting arms above head), then bring arms back to rest at sides, away from hips - check shoulders and hips are comfortably settled.

THEN Build up tension throughout your body by pulling toes up towards chest, pressing knees down into pillow, pulling in stomach muscles, squeezing buttocks together, making a fist with hands, push arms, shoulders and head down into floor. Feel tension throughout body, then slowly let go - let muscles relax and think of settling more comfortably down.

Gently, shut your eyes.

Place one hand on your stomach - feel your stomach rise with the breath in and fall with the breath out. A slow, gentle release of air with the breath out will give you time to respond to the release of tension.

To develop an easy, slow comfortable rhythm of breathing - start with a deep breath in (as much air as you can) then a slow, gentle breath out - then settle to an easy comfortable rhythm (try pushing stomach out with breath in then slowly, gently releasing air - a longer breath out).

Between each of the following exercises think of using several gentle breaths in and out to settle even more comfortably.

EXERCISES

1. Pull toes up towards chest - feel the stretch (e.g. on the back of the ankles and calf) - gradually let go completely. Repeat once more.
2. Point toes down - feel the tension and stretch - then slowly let go. Repeat once. Think of where your heels are resting, where the weight is supported - without pressing your heels down - feel them settle more comfortably down with each gentle breath out.
3. Roll the knees together, press the back of the knees into the mattress - feel tension behind knees, in thighs and hips - slowly let go - repeat once.

Spend a few moments concentrating on left leg - think of it feeling heavier, of settling even more comfortably down with each gentle breath out. Then spend a few moments concentrating on right leg - let all the tension and tightness go.

REFOCUS

Think of a more pleasant time, place, situation or activity that is meaningful, satisfying and fulfilling. Take a moment to write down some thoughts now. Write about a time when you succeeded in refocusing.