



10 Ways to Aid Relaxation

Relaxation is just as important to our mental health and wellbeing as a nutritious diet and physical exercise. Those who struggle to relax run the risk of developing chronic stress, where stress hormones occur in the body in large amounts contributing to sustained low energy, anxiety or depression. There are immense benefits to relaxation such as lowering blood pressure, improving digestion, reducing stress hormones, increasing blood flow around the body to major organs, reducing muscle tension and maintaining normal blood sugar levels. Relaxation is not just about sitting down and doing nothing, although this may be helpful and restorative at times, but relaxation can include physical exercise. Many people find exercise a great way to relax, unwind and reset themselves. Below are some ideas to help with relaxation.

Mindful Meditation

Whether it's a guided meditation on breathing, or a body scan to check in on where you are holding onto tension in your body, or a specific meditation to cultivate self-compassion and compassion to others, taking just 5 minutes each day to practice a meditation can help reset the mind and body, and provide a welcome break from a busy day.

Reading

Taking the time to switch off and relax with a good book can be hugely relaxing. Whether science fiction is your genre, or crime action, or romantic comedy, finding a space to absorb yourself in a book with an interesting plot, can hold your attention and reduce your worries and concerns for that period of time, no matter how brief.

Music

Music can be relaxing, help you connect with your emotions, and provide an opportunity to distract from worries and negative thinking. Try and immerse yourself in the music and lyrics, noticing the different instruments in the song, and listening mindfully.

Having a bubble bath

Soaking your body in warm water can be a great way to relax. If you have time, adding some essential oils and candles to the experience can relieve both body and mind, and soothe tired muscles.

Taking a break from the normal routine

It doesn't have to be a long break, particularly if you are extremely busy with a hectic work schedule and deadlines to meet, but just by stepping away from responsibilities, emails, work commitments, and your mobile phone, and doing something entirely different for that brief period, can help you relax and return to work and your life with renewed vigour.

Massage

Stress tends to be held in the shoulders and neck. Massage, as well as helping you to relax, can address the imbalance caused from long periods of sitting. It can help ease pain and can soothe anxiety and depression. For those who experience tension headaches, massage can relieve the frequency and severity of the headache, and can also help improve quality of sleep.

Ecotherapy

Ecotherapy is a type of therapeutic treatment doing outdoor activities in nature. The benefits can be immense. Nature and the outdoors can improve mental health immeasurably and provide a great way to meet other people, connect, and make new friends.

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery is a calming and relaxing practice. Not only can it provide an opportunity to de-stress from a busy, hectic day, but it can help with decision making. You can either use a guided imagery recording (many are available online), your own imagination, or perhaps a professional such as a yoga teacher or therapist who may offer this service. As well as relaxation, relief of physical tension and stress, it can aid your own inner wisdom and help reframe your mind into a more positive state.

Get Creative

There are many health benefits to being more creative. Research indicates that art and creativity can help keep us well, aid recovery and promote healthier, longer lives. Whether it's playing a musical instrument, drawing, painting, photography, poetry, or writing, all of these activities can promote brain function, relieve stress, and help us to problem-solve.

Get some alone time

Social isolation and loneliness have been connected to many risk factors such as obesity, heart disease, depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, and Alzheimer's disease. Social isolation and loneliness are not the same thing as purposeful solitude and alone time. Solitary pursuits can enable you to learn more about yourself. Quality alone time can mean doing worthwhile things without opinions, distractions and influences of other people. This doesn't mean abandoning your social connections and support network. It means, that for some of us, seeking a preference for solitude at times, can help in pursuing activities at your own place and in your own way, and can actually help improve relationships by providing vital, restorative time away from others, where you can focus your mind and learn something new.