

Five-Minute Stress Relief.com

Relaxation Techniques for Today's World

Dr. Benson proved the relaxation response by showing us to how to evoke this mechanism through healing relaxation and detailing the amazing benefits that can be derived. (Dr. Benson's work showed that oxygen consumption diminishes 8% during restful sleep of 4-5 hours, while the relaxation response results in 10-17% reduction of oxygen consumption in a manner of minutes.) Research has shown 20 minutes of meditation can be as effective as medication for high blood pressure and arterial disease. Yet, considering the information in "Why Meditation Requires Effort," how can we practically achieve the relaxation response amidst our hectic schedules?

Breathing Techniques – breathing is not only essential to life (estimates are we breathe in and out between 16,000 and 20,000 times a day), but our breathing process also helps regulate the rate of our heartbeat, the level of our blood pressure and even how we feel emotionally. Whenever we're upset, our heart rate and blood pressure increase significantly. Consciously slowing down our breathing rate, not only lowers heart rate and blood pressure, it also eases muscle tension, calms our emotions and slows the brain's electrical activity and, therefore, can be a powerful tool in gaining some control over how we react to situations. Specific five-minute breathing techniques are offered on this website: See *Breathing Techniques*

Listening to Calming Sounds – Music can help reduce your heart rate and blood pressure. The rhythm and tone of soothing music can quiet the mind and emotions, helping to turn off your sympathetic nervous system's stress hormones and agitating effects, allowing your parasympathetic nervous system to calm your body into a peaceful state. Soothing music is used to help premature babies cope with painful procedures, as crying is reduced by music. Soothing music is used to reduce the pain of cancer treatments. Many people also enjoy relaxing by listening to natural sounds like ocean waves, gentle rain and soothing wind. These CDs are offered on this website: See *Relaxing Sounds CDs*

Healing Imagery – Imagery is a fundamental language that the mind uses to communicate with the body. Guided imagery involves focusing on a particular sensory image to create a positive physical reaction. Advocates of imagery contend that the imagination is a potent healer that has long been overlooked by practitioners of Western medicine. Healing visualization images are provided on this website: See *Healing Images*

Guided Visualization – Many people use guided visualization for a variety of physical health benefits such as quieting body and mind, lowering of blood pressure as well as the level of stress hormones in the blood. The technique of guided visualization occurs when someone is leading a person through steps of visualization with suggestions on what the person should be visualizing. A wide assortment of five-minute guided visualizations on CDs are offered on this website: See *Audio Programs*

Biofeedback – teaches people stress-reduction skills by practicing with sophisticated instruments that measure heart rate, skin temperature and muscle tension.. Individuals are given training in gaining control over bodily processes. Although proven effective, biofeedback is quite expensive and requires dedicated practice.

Yoga and Tai Chi – two ancient physical methods that have proven benefits to lower blood pressure and slow down heart rate, while also providing a gentle form of athletic conditioning for the body. Each requires beginning to intermediate instruction before one can properly perform the process by themselves.