

Relaxation

Class 1

Everything you always wanted to know about relaxation but were afraid to ask.

This booklet contains information about:

- benefits of relaxation
 - recommendations for relaxation
 - breathing techniques
 - relaxed postures
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Why relax?

Research has told us that a regular relaxation practice can help individuals with chronic pain in many ways.

Some of these include:

- an increase in activity
- less severity of pain
- less anxiety
- less depression
- less anger
- fewer visits to health care facilities

A regular relaxation practice has also been shown to:

- lower blood pressure
- help with insomnia and sleeping issues
- reduce PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome)
- fewer migraine and cluster headaches

The above are some of the benefits to a regular relaxation practice. The mind and body work together to help reduce stress.

To learn more please discuss with Dr. Hapidou, Psychologist, and your case manager in the Program.

Recommendations for relaxation

We want you to be able to get the best out of the relaxation training sessions here at the Michael G. DeGroote Pain Clinic. This is what we recommend:

1. It is best to begin relaxation by:

- sitting in a chair with good back support
- arms on your thighs or resting on a pillow
- head and shoulders relaxed
- feet on the floor parallel with each other



2. You can then proceed by lying down.
3. If you tend to fall asleep right away as soon as your “head hits the pillow”, then we advise you remain sitting in a chair for best results for you and others. Often times, during sleep, people tend to snore and this can be disruptive to others if practicing in a group setting.
4. If you still fall asleep and snore, I will simply wake you up by gently calling your name. This is done for your own benefit and is not meant to put you on the spot. In order to benefit from relaxation, you must remain awake. It is also done so that all others will be able to benefit from quietness and peacefulness, and be able to relax.
5. If you find it hard to settle yourself into a good relaxation position, please discuss this with your case manager and myself, and we can help problem solve around it.
6. Good luck and all the best of success in enjoying relaxation!

Breathing

Complete natural breathing and imagination

This exercise combines the relaxing benefits of complete natural breathing with the curative value of positive auto-suggestion. This means using your own power of suggestion to help yourself.

1. Lie down on a rug, blanket or mat on the floor in a “dead body” pose.
2. Place your hands gently on your stomach where the ribs start to separate under the breast bone. This area is called your solar plexus. Practice complete natural breathing for a few minutes.
3. Imagine that, with each incoming breath of air, energy is rushing into your lungs and being immediately stored in your solar plexus. Imagine that as you exhale, this energy is flowing out to all parts of your body. Form a mental picture of this energizing process.
4. Continue on a daily basis for at least 5 to 10 minutes a day.

Alternatives to Step 3 above:

- 3a Keep one hand on your solar plexus and move the other hand to a point on your body that hurts. As you inhale, imagine energy coming in and being stored as in Step 3. As you exhale, imagine the energy flowing to the spot that hurts, stimulating it. Inhale more energy, and when you exhale imagine the energy driving out to the pain.

It is useful for you to have a clear picture of this process in your mind as you alternatively stimulate the spot that hurts and then drive out the pain.

- 3b Keep one hand on your solar plexus and move the other hand to a point on your body that has been injured or is infected. Proceed as in Alternative 3a, except as you exhale, imagine you are directing energy to the affected point and are stimulating it, driving out the infection and/or healing it. See this in your mind's eye.
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Alternate nostril breathing

While this is a general relaxation exercise, people suffering from tension or sinus headaches find it very beneficial.

Sit in a comfortable position with good posture.

Place awareness on your breath.



1. Rest the index and second finger of your right hand on your forehead.
 2. Close your right nostril with your thumb.
 3. Inhale slowly and soundlessly through your left nostril.
 4. Close your left nostril with your ring finger and at the same time open your right nostril by removing your thumb.
 5. Exhale slowly and soundlessly, and as thoroughly as possible, through your right nostril.
 6. Inhale through your right nostril.
 7. Close your right nostril with your thumb and open your left nostril.
 8. Exhale through your left nostril.
 9. Inhale through your left nostril.
- ✓ Begin by doing 5 cycles.
 - ✓ Slowly increase to 10 or 25 cycles.

Complete natural breathing

Think of how natural a baby breathes, so relaxed and comfortable. Today, with stressful lifestyles, tight clothing, lack of movement and poor posture, we have gotten away from this natural breathing. The following yoga exercise, with practice, will become almost as natural as a baby breathing:

1. Begin by sitting or standing up straight in good posture.
2. Breathe through your nose.
3. As you inhale:
 - First fill the lower section of your lungs. Your diaphragm will push your abdomen outward to make room for this air.
 - Second, fill the middle part of your lungs as your lower ribs and chest move forward slightly to accommodate the air.
 - Third, fill the upper part of your lungs as you raise your chest slightly and draw in your abdomen a little to support your lungs.

These 3 steps can be performed in one smooth, continuous inhalation which, with practice, can be done in a couple of seconds.

4. Hold your breath for a few seconds.
5. As you exhale slowly, pull your abdomen in slightly and lift it up slowly as the lungs empty. When you have completely exhaled, relax your abdomen and chest.
6. Now and then, at the end of the inhalation phase, raise your shoulders and collarbone slightly so that the very top of your lungs get filled with fresh air.

Purifying breath

This exercise not only cleans your lungs, it also stimulates and tones up your entire breathing system and refreshes your whole body. It may be practiced by itself or combined with other breathing exercises.

1. Begin by sitting or standing up straight in good posture.
 2. Inhale a complete natural breath as described above.
 3. Hold this breath for a few seconds.
 4. Exhale a little of the air with considerable force through a small hole between your lips, as though you were blowing through a straw. Stop exhaling for a moment and then blow out a bit more air. Repeat this until all the air is exhaled in small, forceful puffs.
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Comparing relaxed and not relaxed positions

Sitting



Relaxed



Not relaxed



Not relaxed



Not relaxed

When lying down



Relaxed



Not relaxed

Feet



Relaxed



Not relaxed



Relaxed

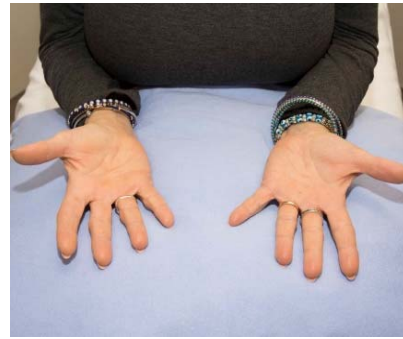


Not relaxed

Hands



Relaxed



Not relaxed



Relaxed



Not relaxed



Not relaxed



Not relaxed

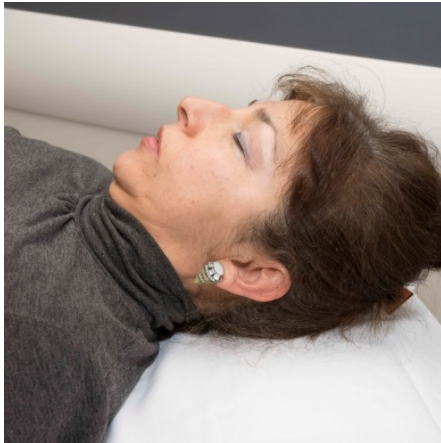
Head and neck



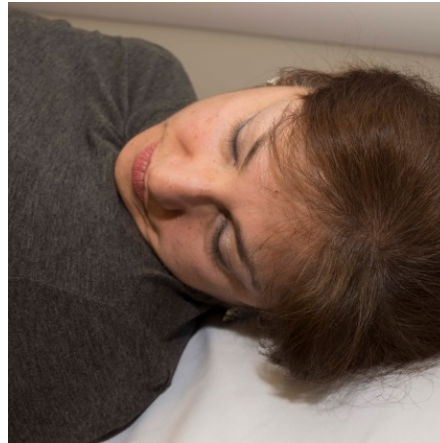
Relaxed



Relaxed



Not Relaxed



Not Relaxed

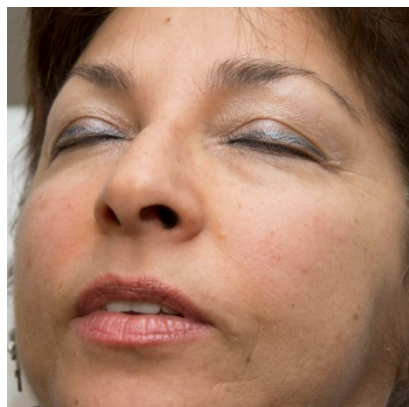


Not Relaxed

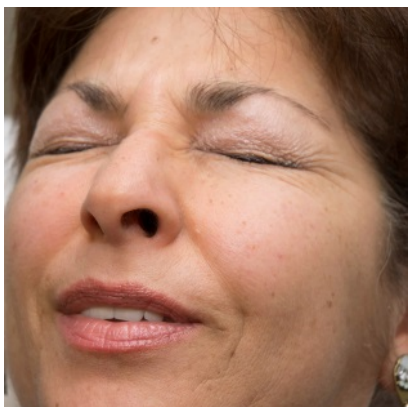


Not Relaxed

Eyes and mouth



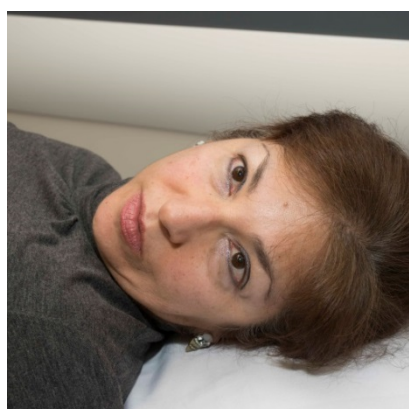
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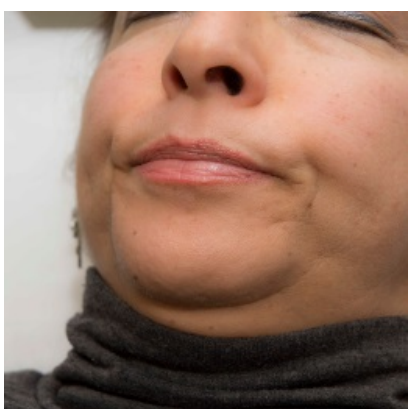
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Not Relaxed

Applied relaxation

1. Find a quiet location, comfortable chair or bed.
 2. Loosen tight clothing, remove glasses or contact lenses.
 3. Concentrate on each of these 4 major muscle groups:
 - Stomach
 - Chest
 - Shoulders
 - Forehead
 4. Let the tension go as you recall the feelings of relaxation for each major muscle group.
 5. Concentrate and relax each major muscle group for 5 minutes.
 6. Maintain a pattern of slow and regular breathing. **Repeat the word “relax” with every exhalation.**
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Rate your level of relaxation both before and after your relaxation session.

Relaxation log

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