

# Practising relaxation

Depression feeds off stress. Managing our stress better is one of the key things we can do to keep depression at bay. And the foundation for managing stress levels is knowing how to relax.

This worksheet will help you evaluate your current relaxation strategies and plan for introducing new relaxation techniques and strategies as a daily routine.

## 1. Keep a relaxation diary

Use the Daily Routines Diary to keep a record of anything you do during the day that you would normally count as 'relaxation'. Record notes or comments relating to your thoughts or mood associated with or following this. Keep the diary for at least a week in the first instance.

### Consider:

Read the info on the 'Practising relaxation' page and consider its relevance to you in relation to the record you have kept. What do you notice about your relaxation habits? Are you using constructive, positive ways to relax, or does your 'relaxation' leave you feeling drained and depressed? Which relaxation strategies worked best for you this week? Do you use or know how to use basic relaxation techniques?



***"I found relaxation exercises helped to calm my mind when I was really anxious or agitated."***  
– Iona

My relaxation evaluation summary:

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## 2. Learning how to breathe

If you haven't previously been introduced to basic relaxation techniques using controlled breathing and/or tension-reduction, then this is the first step. Use the info on the 'Practising relaxation' page to try out some simple exercises right now. If you find this difficult to do on your own then list here which methods you may be able to use to develop these skills, as well as any other ideas for introducing a self-nurturing 'quiet' time:

My ideas for learning and using basic relaxation skills:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. My relaxation plan

Choose a few of the simplest ideas to put into practice first (ensure that breathing practice is included, because this is such an important life skill for lifelong management of stress and anxiety):

Example:

I will practise my relaxation breathing \_\_\_\_\_ every morning just after I have got out of bed (when), standing at the window (if it is light) or looking at a nature picture on my wall or laptop (where), for 5 minutes (how/long) \_\_\_\_\_

Some ideas include:  
 buying or making recordings of relaxation 'scripts'; joining a yoga, pilates or martial arts class or getting a DVD; seeing if your uni wellbeing centre offers mindfulness training; planning what you can do in a daily 'quiet' time, like making yourself a restful music playlist or going for a daily walk in natural surroundings

If I forget to do it or just for extra practice I will \_\_\_\_\_ do a few breaths whenever I remember, wherever I am \_\_\_\_\_

I will do at least one of the following every day, with the conscious intention of practising relaxation skills:

\_\_\_\_\_ Give myself a 30-minute 'quiet' time break, when I get back in from the library/lectures, and make myself a cup of tea and have a sit down and chat/read before I think about any other work or commitment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Go to a class or use online video instruction for yoga or tai chi relaxation \_\_\_\_\_

Things I need to change/do to give me the best of chance of sticking to this plan:

\_\_\_\_\_ Set a timer for the 30 minutes and make sure I have a plan for what I want to do straight after the 'quiet time' so I don't just sit around all afternoon \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ See if Tom wants to sign up to up to do tai chi at the sports centre with me \_\_\_\_\_

#### My relaxation intention statement:

I will practise my relaxation breathing \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (when)

\_\_\_\_\_ (where)

\_\_\_\_\_ (how/long)

If I forget to do it or just for extra practice I will \_\_\_\_\_

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(when, where, how/long)

I will do at least one of the following every day, with the conscious intention of practising relaxation skills:

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Things I need to change/do to give me the best of chance of sticking to this plan:

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#### 4. Evaluation

Once you have put your relaxation plan into action for a few weeks, use the diary to check how things are going and what strategies are working best for you. Choose something else off your list and try to build up a variety of relaxation strategies. Work on other aspects of your daily routine – in particular, increasing your ‘active’ or vigorous relaxation strategies, through exercise, is a very good complement to the other techniques. More vigorous exercise is an excellent outlet for excess stress hormones, and is an energising form of relaxation.

