



Relaxation Plan for Better Sleep

Mayo Clinic Center for Sleep Medicine

Understanding relaxation and stress management

Now that you have reviewed relaxation skills and techniques, you can begin to identify how the concepts of relaxation and stress management may benefit your sleep.

Managing stress

A practical way to view how stress and tension can impact sleep is to imagine these issues add fuel to rev up your internal motor. People that carry a lot of excess tension, stress and worries, walk around with an internal motor that is revved at a higher rate than someone who is calm and managing stress. This revved state makes it harder to relax and fall asleep. Thus if you can decrease your stress responses at intervals throughout the day, you decrease the intensity of your internal motor and sleep comes more easily when you go to bed.

Relaxation techniques

Relaxation and stress management are lifestyle choices. Relaxation techniques are skills you can practice daily for 20 to 30 minutes. Relaxation techniques work best if you practice the skills daily and integrate the concepts into actual moments of daily living. For example, taking a few deep relaxing breaths during a stressful or tense moment is just as important as the 20 to 30 minutes you set aside to practice relaxation techniques every day.

Once you develop your relaxation techniques to a point where they become part of your daily lifestyle, you have mastered the concept.

If you do not feel benefits right away, do not be discouraged. Be patient and stay motivated. Increasing your self-awareness to your reactions and changing old responses and habits takes time.

Relaxation techniques that work best for you

Everyone is different. Therefore, you may find that while a certain relaxation technique works for someone else it does not work well for you. For example, practicing progressive muscle relaxation may work well for you but practicing imagery does not.

You know yourself best and have an idea of which techniques interest you more. If you can see yourself doing a relaxation technique, you are more likely to actually do it and succeed.

A 5-Step Relaxation Plan

First Step: Identify your ability to relax and manage stress

List 4 to 5 current ways you use to relax or manage stress:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Think about your answers. Answer the following:

- Are these current ways helpful?
- Do they improve your overall health and well being?

If you answered yes:

- Do you do these techniques on a regular basis or only when stressed?

If you answered no:

- The relaxation techniques are likely not helpful and should be replaced with another technique or activity.

Second Step: Identify 1 to 2 new relaxation techniques or activities you would like to try.

1. _____
2. _____

Third Step: Outline your practice plan

Fourth Step: Identify obstacles you may face

Fifth Step: Identify how you can overcome your obstacles

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