

# Relaxing Exercises

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Relaxing exercises may be performed first thing in the morning before getting out of bed. They may be repeated during the day if desired. Exercises should always be done at night prior to retiring—relaxing suggestions will eventually merge into sleep. The total time for each session should be at least 20 minutes.

## **After shutting your eyes, proceed with the following steps:**

1. Deep, slow breathing for about ten breaths.
2. Progressive muscle relaxation from forehead, face, neck to finger tips, and from chest to toes—visualizing and purposefully loosening each muscle group.
3. Visualizing a wonderfully relaxed scene or simply a blank white wall.
4. Slow counting to self from 1 to 20 while visualizing the relaxed scene or white wall.
5. Relaxing or sleeping from one to two minutes during which visualization of the relaxed scene continues.
6. Make the following suggestions to yourself (using the word “you”).
  - Symptom relief (disturbing symptoms, like tension, etc. will get less and less upsetting).
  - Self-confidence (self-assuredness will grow).
  - Situational control (visualize impending difficult situations and successful mastery of them).
  - Self-understanding (make connections if possible between flare-ups of symptoms and precipitating events and inner conflicts).
7. Relax or sleep for several more minutes.
8. During daytime arouse yourself by counting from one to five.
9. At night do not arouse yourself, continue relaxing until sleep supervenes.

If sleep begins developing during the fourth step before the count comes to an end, interrupt counting and proceed immediately to suggestions (sixth step above). Then continue with count and go as deeply as you wish. A racing mind and tendency to distraction are normal. When this occurs, force your attention back to the exercises.

Remember, you will not really be asleep during these exercises. You will be aware of your thoughts and of stimuli on the outside. If for any reason, you want to bring yourself out of the relaxed state before finishing, tell yourself that at the count of five you will be out of it. Count from one to five and say to yourself, “Be wide awake now – open your eyes.” If negative thoughts crop up, by-pass them, and continue with the steps outlined above. Results are rarely immediate. It takes a while to neutralize negative suggestions you have been giving yourself all your life.

*So be patient. Persistence is the keynote to success.*