



British Tinnitus Association - Registered Charity No: 1011145

Relaxation

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The aim of this leaflet is to try to encourage you to look more deeply into relaxation, to take a real interest in relaxation and to understand how it can help you if you have tinnitus.

Relaxation is something that you do - it is not done to you, nobody can make you do it, it is something that you are willing to do, in any way that suits you. There is no wrong way in which to relax, but let us be quite clear about what we mean by the word 'relaxation'. You need to set aside some time to do nothing... that is all. You need to experience what it is like to do nothing so that you can take that feeling and memory with you throughout each day.

When we relax, certain changes take place in the body: the heart beat slows down as does the breathing; blood pressure drops and brain activity decreases which is why we feel physically and mentally refreshed after relaxing in this way.

It is best to practise when you feel good. Find the right environment, so that allowing yourself to let go becomes a first resort rather than a last

one. Let it become a matter of routine, a welcome and beneficial habit that takes you through each day in a way that pleases you. You will find that you gain greater control over your emotions, over the way you react to things, over your tinnitus.

One way to increase relaxation in the body is by paying particular attention to the breathing. The breathing is something that we tend to take very much for granted. So from time to time, concentrate on your breath - just watch it enter the body and leave the body. Observe the gentle rhythm that comes with breathing easily and effortlessly.

Now try to slow the breath down by taking 3 or 4 slow even breaths in and out through the nose. Try to make the IN breath take the same amount of time as the OUT breath. As you breathe OUT let go of tension particularly in the jaw, neck, shoulders and abdomen. This has a calming effect and can be combined with other rhythms, like that of walking... so, for example, you can breathe in for 3 steps and out for 3 steps.

Another exercise to do whilst sitting or

standing still is to breathe in and out through the nose and then just stay quietly WITHOUT BREATHING IN AGAIN, for a few seconds, watching the space between that breath and the next. Let no strain enter the body, just breathe in again when you feel the need. You are looking for control and the slowing down of the breath for a couple of minutes, and this can be an aid to greater concentration.

The beauty and strength of the breathing exercises are that you can do them anywhere and at any time - standing, walking, sitting or lying down. They can be extended and control of the abdominal muscles can be introduced and combined with breath control. You will find more breathing exercises in books on Stress Management, Relaxation, Yoga etc. so take an interest in learning to control your breath. Practise when you feel good, so that at times of stress you will, almost automatically, be able to restore calm and balance.

To go deeply into the practice of relaxation, more time has to be set aside. It is preferable (certainly at first) to try to practise every two or three days, but even once a week can bring benefits. Ideally, at least fifteen minutes should be spent on this exercise. You can learn to relax to the point where your body feels as though it is hardly a part of you and your mind feels relaxed and uncluttered.

So, to get the body to be able to reach this stage, you must first make it

comfortable. Make sure that you are not going to be disturbed. Make sure too, that you are going to be warm, because the body does lose heat as it winds down. You should be totally supported (head, back and legs) so use the floor, a bed or couch, a good high-backed chair with footrest, whatever suits you best and treat yourself to this special time. If you wear glasses, remove them. If you find background noise helpful, play music or natural sounds that do not demand your attention.

Relax the muscles in each part of the body, working from head to toe or vice versa, paying particular attention to those areas where you know you may have tension. If any muscle groups do feel tense, then gently stretch them and let them move back quite easily into a comfortable position. If, when you relax, you feel any discomfort anywhere, then adjust your position and this will help you to relax even more deeply.

Close your eyes and spend a few moments watching the breath entering the body and then leaving it slightly warmer and moister. As you breathe out, tell yourself to let go. Do this a couple of times more, saying to yourselfrelax.....let go..... each time you breathe OUT.

In the same way that you watch the breath in and out, observe your thoughts. These will come - that is as it should be - but try not to become involved in them - just let them go. If you

find your attention wandering to everyday things or if you are troubled by a problem, then very gently but quite firmly bring your concentration back into your relaxing, back into your breathing and let go a bit more as you exhale. Check that the body has not tightened up in response to these intrusive thoughts, and then let yourself drift once more.

Try not to judge how well you are relaxing - aim just to enjoy it. It is, after all, a state of doing absolutely nothing and being at peace. No effort is required on your part; if you let go, all tension will leave the body and the mind of its own accord.

When you have spent as much time as you wish on yourself, gently stretch the body (like a cat does) and in your own time and in your own way, become alert and active once more, feeling good.

Find time during the day to remember what it is like to relax deeply. Find a comfortable chair and sit for a minute or two allowing yourself to let go as much as you can. You can take a couple of slow breaths, concentrate on relaxing muscles in the face and shoulders, allowing the hands to rest in the lap. It really does not matter how you achieve this, but do give those moments to yourself and you will gradually notice the benefits.

Over time, you will learn that no expensive equipment or special place is needed for you to practise relaxation. The abilities to relax are all within you. Be kind to yourself, be gentle with yourself, look after yourself and you will greatly benefit. So too, will those around you as they see the calm and strong person that you now are.

May 2004 – © British Tinnitus Association

This information is not a substitute for medical advice. You should always see your GP / medical professional

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