

Relaxation is a useful tool to help you handle stress effectively.

- Deep breathing. Breathe in for a count of 4 and out for a count of 4, concentrating on the out breath.
- Lying on the floor on your back, hands by your sides slowly raise both arms together while breathing in for a count of 7, then lowering them for a count of 14 while breathing out.
- Have a relaxing bubble bath.
- Go for a walk.
- Talk to a friend.
- Regular exercise, e.g. yoga, running.
- Take up a hobby you enjoy / make time for yourself.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Can be done sitting on a chair or lying on the floor.

### Hands and Arms

Clench fists, tense arms. Feel the tightness in your hands and arms then slowly relax them. Let them go as much as you can.

### Shoulders

Hunch up shoulders then gradually let them settle down.

### Forehead

Make a frown by pulling your eyebrows together then gradually let your forehead smooth out.

### Eyes

Screw your eyes up tight then let them smooth out, keeping your eyes closed, feeling your eyeballs sink and your eyelids droop. Let them get really heavy.

### Jaw

Clench your teeth together then gradually let go, letting your jaw get slack with your tongue resting at the bottom of your mouth.

### Back of Neck

Push your chin forward onto your chest, feeling the tightness then relax.

### Front of Neck

Push your head back, feeling the tightness then relax.

### Breath

Concentrate on breathing slowly and evenly, letting go when you breathe out.

### Stomach

Pull in your stomach as much as you can, then relax.

### Thighs

Push your heels down hard on the floor feeling the tightness, and then let go.

### Calves

Point your toes feeling the tightness in your calf muscles, then let go. It may help you to imagine a colour, image or scene such as lying by a river on a quiet summer afternoon. Continue to lie and relax for 5 or 10 minutes. Remember to practice your relaxation techniques. It is a skill that needs to be learned over time, so be patient with yourself. Try and set aside time for relaxation and don't give up.