

RELAXATION



Why is relaxation so important?

“Sometimes the most productive thing you can do is relax” - Mark Black

This is such an inspiring yet simple quote!

In the hectic non-stop world we live in today, we all have times when we have deadlines to meet and work-life pressure that we actually forget to relax! Relaxing for just 5 minutes periodically throughout your day by stepping away from what is causing our stress levels to rise, can give us the energy we need to tackle our workload or the problem we are facing.

Not all stress is bad! A certain amount of stress is necessary to deal with difficult situations in our everyday lives. In some situations the body's "fight" or "flight" response can be triggered, creating physical changes in our bodies which enable us to take action. These physical changes usually fade quickly once the pressure has subsided. However, if we stay in a state of high stress for too long, it can be damaging to our health.

Here are some methods that can help you to relax:

- Focus on your breathing
- Meditation – you can always use an app to help such as Headspace or Calm.
- Progressive muscle relaxation (tighten and relax your muscles throughout your body)
- Visualisation – imagine a relaxing place and focus on the details.
- Take a gentle walk being mindful of your surroundings, keep your focus on the plants, the trees, the sunshine, the clouds...



How does relaxation affect the body?

Deep relaxation and meditation can help shut down the release of stress chemicals into the bloodstream simply by counteracting some of the effects of these chemicals.

Stress chemicals send impulses to the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for keeping the body active and alert. When the sympathetic nervous system is active, the opposite-functioning parasympathetic nervous system is inhibited.

Deep relaxation and meditation allows the parasympathetic nervous system to become active by down-regulating the sympathetic nervous system. What happens after this involves a change in the brains 'electricity' which allows us to maintain a balance in brain chemicals.

Relaxation also has other related health benefits, including:

- Lowering your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate.
- Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain.
- Improving concentration and mood.
- Reducing fatigue.
- Reducing anger and frustration.
- Boosting confidence to handle problems.

