

Relaxation Technique for Good Rest

Technique step-by-step

1. Lie down on your back, legs outstretched, arms along your sides, palms relaxed in whatever position they fall naturally, letting your fingers curl and your feet turned outward slightly.
 2. Shake your limbs slightly and let them fall limp. Repeat with your torso, gently and briefly tensing muscles and relaxing them. Last, do the same with your shoulders, head and neck, finding a position where your neck is completely relaxed. Often it will require a slight turn of your head.
 3. Imagine that your attention is a spotlight projector; when you focus on a part of your body, a round spot of a warm light concentrates on it. Muscles relax under this spot and warmth fills the body under it. You may feel your pulse in the part of the body you focus on. Now focus on the toes of your left foot.
 4. Slowly widen the spot to your entire foot, and then move it up your leg, over the knee to the hip. Pause, switch to the right foot and repeat the move through your right leg. "Connect" the relaxed legs by moving the spotlight over your stomach.
 5. Place the spotlight on the fingers of your left hand. Move slowly up through the elbow to the shoulder. You may need to move your shoulder slightly to help it relax. (*This trick is very useful in feeling the difference between tensed and relaxed muscles, as we tend not to notice that some parts of our body are holding tension. Especially as it concerns the shoulders, the neck, the back of your head, and your facial muscles.*) Switch to the right hand, move up to your right shoulder and "connect" the arms by focusing on your chest.
 6. Focus on your lower back and move up toward the neck. To relax the neck, you may have to slightly move your head, finding the best position again.
 7. Focus on your face – this is an area where we frequently tend to tense our muscles without realizing it, especially our lips and jaw. As you start paying attention, you will likely be amazed by all the tightness you never noticed. Your particular area of tension may be different; for instance, many find their forehead holding the most tension.
 8. Last part to relax is the tongue. You are likely familiar with that incessant buzz in your head, which tends to get in the way of falling asleep. When we involuntarily re-enact the day's events in our mind, we also tend to replay dialogs, and the tongue's muscles reflexively follow suit. Relaxing these helps to stop that re-enactment.
 9. At this point you should be feeling a very pleasant heaviness in your muscles. Pay attention to this feeling and try to memorize it. With practice, you will be able to initiate this state of complete relaxation faster, directly recalling the muscle memory of this heaviness.
 10. Move your eyeballs under the eyelids slightly upward and inward, as if looking at the bridge of your nose. Relax them there and gently run your attention spotlight all over your body, as if observing it from above.
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Bonus tip #1: If your limbs are cold, warm them up quickly by imagining them as a glass cylinders (such as those of a test tube), full of hot red blood gently lapping inside.

Bonus tip #2: If you have a headache, concentrate on your breathing, imagining the air inhaled through your nose filling your chest and exiting through the top of your head on the exhale.