



Relaxation Training Techniques

Breathing Control Techniques

The 5-to-1 Count

Do the following in order:

- Saying the number 5 to yourself and taking a full, slow breath as you focus on the number of 5.
- Exhaling fully and completely - getting the last bit of air out of the lungs is essential.
- Counting 4 and inhaling.
- Saying "I am now more relaxed now than I was at number 5" as you exhale.
- Exhale fully and completely and do not rush your thoughts.
- Counting 3 and inhaling.
- Saying "I am now more relaxed now than I was at number 4" as you exhale fully and completely.
- Counting 2 and inhaling.
- Saying "I am now more relaxed now than I was at number 3" as you exhale fully and completely.
- Counting 1 and inhaling.
- Saying "I am now more relaxed now than I was at number 2" as you exhale fully and completely.

Remember that you should allow yourself to feel the deepening relaxation. As you approach the number 1, you should feel calmer and more relaxed.

Three-Part Breathing

Do the following in order:

- Take a deep breath from your diaphragm.
- Imagine that your lungs are divided into three parts - upper, middle and lower
- Imagine the lower part of your lungs filling with air. Use only your diaphragm when you breathe - your chest should remain relatively still.
- Imagine the middle part of your lungs filling with air. As you visualize this expansion, let your rib cage move forward a bit.
- Imagine your upper lungs filling with air and your lungs being completely full. Let your shoulders rise slightly and move backward.
- Exhale fully and completely. As you empty the upper part of your lungs, drop your shoulders slightly. See the air leaving the middle part of your lungs, and feel your ribcage contract. Pull your abdomen in to force the last bit of air from the bottom of your lungs.
- Repeat the above sequence four times.

Visual Controlled Breathing

Do the following in order:

- Close your eyes.
- Visualize your body in a comfortable, relaxed position.
- Inhale slowly, seeing your chest fill with air.
- Hold it momentarily.
- Exhale slowly, seeing a steady release of air through the mouth and nose.
- Feel the release of tension and/or anxiety.
- Repeat the above sequence four times.

Kinesthetic Controlled Breathing

Do the following in order:

- Close your eyes.
- Feel your stomach out, chest and shoulders steady.
- Slowly inhale, feeling the increase of air in the chest and the of the shoulders.
- Hold it.
- Slowly exhale, feeling a release in tension as the shoulders and chest drop and the stomach relaxes.
- Repeat the above sequence four times.

Audio Controlled Breathing

Do the following in order:

- Close your eyes.
- Hear yourself slowly inhale and exhale air as you breathe.
- Slowly inhale a breath.
- Hear the air pass through your mouth and nose.
- Feel the release of tension.
- Slowly release the air.
- Hear the sound of the air passing through your nose and mouth.
- Repeat the above sequence four times.

Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This exercise's goal is to teach you how to feel or sense tense muscles, and then relax them. In this exercise, you'll purposefully tense various muscles, focus your attention on how it feels, then force your muscles to relax. Learn the contrasting feeling.

Once a day, in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, lie on your back and close your eyes. Follow the instructions. Overall, this exercise should take about 20-30 minutes. When you clench each muscle for this exercise, hold the muscles tight for 5-8 seconds before relaxing.

- Beginning with your right hand, clench it into a tight fist. Feel how tight the muscles are. Hold the tension for 5-8 seconds while concentrating on how it feels. Relax, letting all tension leave you. Focus on how the muscles feel different from the clenched fist. Repeat this.
- Tense the left hand as above, hold, then relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Flex the muscles in your right arm to tighten the forearms and biceps, then relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Flex the muscles in your left arm to tighten the forearms and biceps, hold, then relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Frown to tense the forehead, hold, then relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Clench your jaw muscles, hold, then relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Shrug the shoulders for tension, hold, then relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Take a deep breath, hold it to tense. Slowly exhale and feel yourself relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Tighten your stomach muscles, hold, then relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Point your toes downward to tense, hold, then relax. Focus on the contrast. Repeat.
- Take a slow deep breath, drawing in the air by your stomach moving outward. Slowly exhale by moving your stomach inward.
- Repeat the above deep breathe three times. Center your attention on this breathing process.
- Return to normal breathing.

At this point, you should be relaxed. Use this technique to relax yourself, by practicing it regularly. In stressful situations, scan yourself for tense muscles and relax them as you focus on your deep breathing.

This can be an especially helpful exercise for shooters who overgrip their firearms, or tense up their shoulders at a match.