



Relaxation Exercise

What is relaxation?

Relaxation is a method we can use to manage stress and to reach a healthy balance in our lives. Relaxation exercises can help you deal with stressful situations when they occur. Relaxation is an enjoyable and pleasant activity that you can share with your baby, so that he/she will not only learn to benefit from these exercises, but will also have wonderful memories of you. Children can be taught how to do relaxation exercises from a very young age, similar to how they are taught to brush their teeth, how to pray, how to be polite, how to eat regularly, etc.

A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ABOUT LEARNING TO RELAX

1. Practice, Practice, Practice!
2. The goal: to relax without doing the exercise.
3. As you prepare to relax:
 - Choose a quiet, comfortable environment where there are few distractions.
 - Choose a time of day when you are least likely to be disturbed, and not too soon after a meal. For example, try relaxing upon awakening or when you are ready to go to sleep. Also, try relaxing during the middle of the day, particularly *just before* you have to do something difficult or *just after* you have had to face a stressful situation.
 - Select a comfortable position.
 - Try not to worry about how well you are doing. If you begin to experience distracting thoughts, slowly return your mind to the task of relaxing.



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USING YOUR BREATH TO LEARN TO RELAX



STEPS TO FOLLOW:

- **Sit quietly in a comfortable position.**
- **Close your eyes.**
- Relax all your muscles as fully and deeply as possible. Start with either end of the body (your feet or your head) and move systematically all the way up or down, focusing on each muscle, and relaxing each one.
- Breathe easily and naturally through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say a brief word you have chosen to repeat (for example, the word "one" or the word "relax").
- Continue for about ten minutes at first, until you get used to producing the feeling of relaxation. Your goal is to be able to produce this feeling in one minute or even less at any time you choose. This way, you can provide yourself with a moment of relaxation as often as you wish throughout your day.
- Before you open your eyes, remind yourself to retain this feeling of deep relaxation and simultaneous alertness when you return to your normal activities.

This method is nicely described in a book called *The Relaxation Response* by Herbert Benson (New York: Avon Books, 1975).