

# Relax, enjoy being



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There is a lot of talking about relaxation and mostly people think they know all about it, even if they haven't experienced it yet.

People who are expecting action and immediate results may be somehow ironic about it. We might hear: "Stop relaxing and do something". "Doing something" is indeed very well appreciated in our culture and is taken for a sign of energy. One may still wonder what's the limit between "stress or agitation" and energy.

Let's talk about the benefits of relaxation and the techniques that lead us to that state.

### I. The benefits of relaxation

Relaxation is an art, more or less inherited, according to our culture. Oriental cultures develop very early that knowledge and value it.

Relaxation helps us be more confident and more effective in everything we do, being more creative. We deserve to have all the time we need to relax, just because it is pleasurable to breath and to listen to a music or a voice that guides us. It feels good to have our mind slow down.

In occidental cultures, we discover more and more the benefits of relaxation :

- ✓ it reduces blood pressure,
- ✓ improves the digestive process,
- ✓ increases the activity of the immune system,
- ✓ slows breathing and heart rate,
- ✓ reduces stress and develops positive thinking.

Through deep breathing, relaxation brings to the blood the right amount of oxygen which allows to release the tensions.

Taking time for ourselves and regenerating our system, allows us to look at things differently, and react in a more adapted and efficient way to the difficult situations we are facing.

### II. The techniques

There are different techniques that lead to relaxation. The 3 most important are:

1. Breathing
2. Muscles contraction
3. Visualization.

One could also add massage and positive thinking. But these two approaches are so important that they deserve an article each. You'll find a lot of writing on these two topics. And I'll come back to them separately later.

Generally, in order to relax, one has to pick a comfortable and quiet place where he won't be disturbed. One switches off the phone, wears loose clothes and loosens tie or belt if any, puts glasses and watch aside, etc. Then, one finds a comfortable position sitting in an armchair or lying on a couch. An inspiring soft music will help creating a pleasant atmosphere and facilitates relaxation. A tape or a class equally help us to reach a deep relaxation state.

1. **Breathing** is the way we bring oxygen to our lungs, our heart and our blood. If we stop breathing, we die: everybody knows that.

But we tend to breath, more or less appropriately, according to our posture, our clothes and mostly very superficially. Whereas sportsmen and sportswomen, singers, dancers, musicians, etc. learn how to breath deeply and fill their stomach with air, then their lungs, we often "hold our breath" and do not have the benefits of good deep breathing. The consequence is our muscles are tense and we realize it only certain areas of our body get soar. Then, we mostly seek for a massage or just go on and put up with it as if it would be natural.

Deep abdominal breathing can be learned and become natural to us in our daily life. It also helps us fall asleep as it releases our tensions.

2. **Muscles contraction** is a very simple and efficient way to relax. Generally, the person starts relaxing by tensing all the areas of the body one after the other, starting by the feet and ending with the face and the brain.

One starts by *tensing* the left leg and releases it, then the left thigh, the right leg and thigh, then the buttocks, the stomach, the back, the chest, then the hands and the arms. Finally, lift the shoulders to the ears and release them two or three times, make a face and then relax.

All that time, the person remains aware of her breathing to maintain a good oxygen in the body. She inhales, tenses the muscles, exhales and releases them. During the process, we feel waves of energy flowing in our body. It feels pleasantly light or for some people heavier. We enter a subconscious state that is quite pleasant.

At the end, stretch legs and arms as far as possible and yawn helps going back to a conscious state when desired.

3. **Visualization** proceeds in the same way except that it uses the power of the mind instead of being a mechanical process.

One starts by *focusing* on the left foot and visualizes it as relaxed and the power of the mind relaxes the muscles. Then visualization goes on for the left leg, thigh, then the right foot, leg and thigh, then the buttocks, the stomach, the back and shoulders, the chest, the hands and the arms, the neck and the face.

One stays for a long time on the face and gives it full attention. One visualizes each part of it: the forehead, the eyes, eyelids, eyebrows, the nose, the cheeks, the chin, the jaws, the lips and tongue, the ears, the scalp and the brain.

Visualization goes on focusing on the mind. Generally, people's attention is guided on a safe place, they particularly cherish and let their thoughts drift on pleasant memories in order to create a state of internal joy. In fact, we notice that as the body relaxes, the mind gets also quiet and then can be guided to develop a state of happiness and a positive attitude toward oneself, the others and life, in general. As we repeat this exercise, our unconscious mind learns to bring the deep relaxation and enjoy it.

These techniques seem so simple to use and in fact they are. But mostly, an external voice that guides the person the first time and gives a feed-back, when necessary, can be of a great help especially in the beginning or even later.

In conclusion, we notice that the more we relax, the more we are able to enjoy calm and sureness and allow ourselves to go deeper and sense the comfort of relaxation.