

Refreshing Mind and Body

By Shawna V Carboni, LICSW, DCSW



Have you ever wished you could take a mini-vacation? Just a quick escape in the middle of the day from all the hustle and bustle of life and the stress of work? Well, you can...and it's free! The following is a simple self-hypnosis exercise for relaxation. It is safe, easy to learn and the benefits over time will surprise you!

Choose a quiet room, turn off the phone, dim the lights, and settle into a comfortable chair with good back and head support.

Let your eyes rest upon some object as you bring forth the intention to relax. When you bring to conscious awareness a specific intention, the mind and body orient towards that expectation and objective. When ready to proceed, close your eyes.

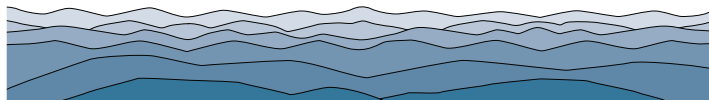
Next, take a deep breath. When stressed, anxious or in pain, we tend to take shallow breaths high up in the chest. So to rest and relax, breathe deep into the belly. One way is to make two fists and place them on top of your abdomen. With each exhale, unfurl one finger. After ten slow breaths, both hands will be open with palms flat on your abdomen. Let the warmth of that contact penetrate and spread.

The mind relaxes and tunes out everyday thoughts and distractions when it is restfully and deeply absorbed in either focusing on or imagining something peaceful and pleasant. So, you can focus on the rhythmic rise and fall of your breath. If desired, repeat a phrase with each exhale, perhaps "let it be" or "easy does it." Choose something simple and soothing that creates a lulling effect.

Or, you can occupy the mind by imagining being some place peaceful and beautiful, or doing something enjoyable and rhythmic such as skiing gracefully down the perfect slope, or slowly cantering a horse. Notice as many sensory details as you can and amplify your kinesthetic experience. The more detailed and vivid the images and sensations, the more absorbed and relaxed you will become.

When ready to end, bring forth the intention to awaken feeling refreshed. Inhale, hold your breath for an instant, then as you exhale, count backwards from 5 to 1 while opening your eyes.

Practice 10-20 minutes each day for a month to develop your proficiency with deep relaxation, restful focusing and detailed imagining. After a month or so, you will probably discover that you can elicit the same deep relaxation and inner refreshment in only 5 or 10 minutes.



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