

Basic relaxation exercises:

Diaphragmatic Breathing  
Progressive Muscular Relaxation  
Imagery

Pointers to note during relaxation exercises:

- Spend 20 mins each day. Let yourself set aside everything. Just feel the relaxed state of your mind and body.
- Please stay away from any possible disturbances. For example, you can switch off your mobile to avoid being disturbed.
- If you find yourself drifted away, you need not worry. Just try to go back to the exercise.
- If you fall asleep during the exercise, you need not worry. Let everything unfold in the way they will.

## Diaphragmatic Breathing

### Advantages of doing diaphragmatic breathing:

1. It facilitates the gaseous exchange in the lungs.
2. It facilitates our bodies to relax, including lowering heart rate and blood pressure, decreasing muscle tension, warming feet and palms, and calming down the whole body, etc. Persistent in doing diaphragmatic breathing could help to enhance the easiness to relax.

### Procedures:

1. Sit on a chair or lie down in a **comfortable place. Close your eyes.**
2. **Inhale** when your **abdomen is expanding**. You might feel a bit tense during this inhalation.
3. **Hold the breath** for a few seconds.
4. When your **abdomen is contracting, exhale** from the mouth very slowly. The exhalation is slow and long.

### Pointers to note:

- During the beginning of doing relaxation exercises, people might have feelings of uneasiness. These are normal responses. Usually people with quick temper would have difficulties in engaging in slow-pace activities. With time, the feelings of uneasiness will be alleviated when people get used to more slow-pace activities.
- Diaphragmatic breathing is a continuous training on relaxation but not a means of direct-first aid when feeling nervous or tense. If you do not have regular practice, even if you use diaphragmatic breathing when feeling nervous, it would not help much.
- Diaphragmatic breathing is a practice for training up our relaxation. We do not need to breathe from time to time using diaphragmatic breathing. We only need to do it during relaxation practice.
- A good breathing is doing it very slowly and deeply under consciousness. It could help us to go into the relaxed state.



## Progressive Muscular Relaxation

Progressive muscular relaxation helps us to relax our muscles systematically. We have to do it step by step.

### Pointers to note during exercises:

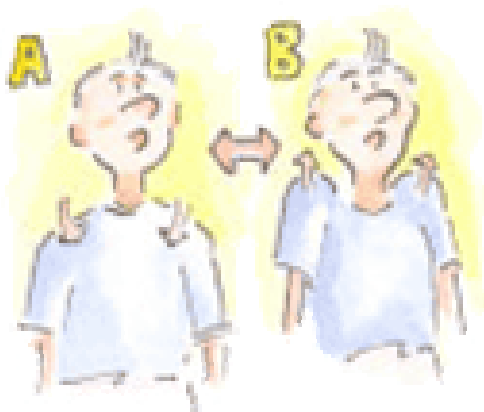
- Systematically contract different sets of muscles in our body and then relax.
- Pay attention to the feelings of tension and relaxation during muscles contraction and relaxation.

### Procedures

1. Sit on a chair or lie down in a comfortable place.
2. Have diaphragmatic breathing or deep breathing for a few times
3. Hands: Clench your fist firmly; hold on this position for a few seconds.  
Feel the state of muscle tension.  
Open your fist. Feel the muscle tension in your hands from tense to relaxed.



4. Shoulders: Push your shoulders upwards.  
Make it close to your ears.  
Hold on this position for a few seconds.  
Feel the state of muscle tension.  
Lower down your shoulder. Feel the muscle tension in your shoulders and neck from tense to relaxed.



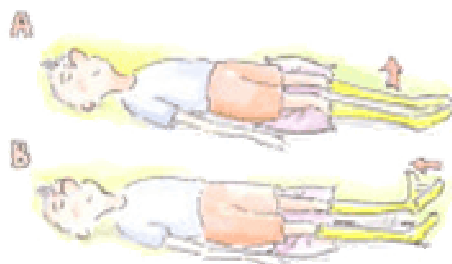
5. Face: Push up your eyebrow. Close your eyes firmly. Push up your nose.  
Grit your teeth and close your mouth.  
Hold on this position for a few seconds.  
Feel the state of muscle tension  
Relax the whole face. Feel the muscle tension in your face from tense to relaxed



6. Abdomen: Take a breath. Stretch your chest. Contract your abdomen.  
Hold on this position for a few seconds.  
Feel the state of muscle tension  
Release your chest and abdomen. Feel the muscle tension in your abdomen from tense to relaxed



7. Legs Lift up your legs. Make it straight and up.  
Hold on this position for a few seconds.  
Feel the state of muscle tension  
Lower down your legs. Feel the muscle tension in your legs from tense to relaxed



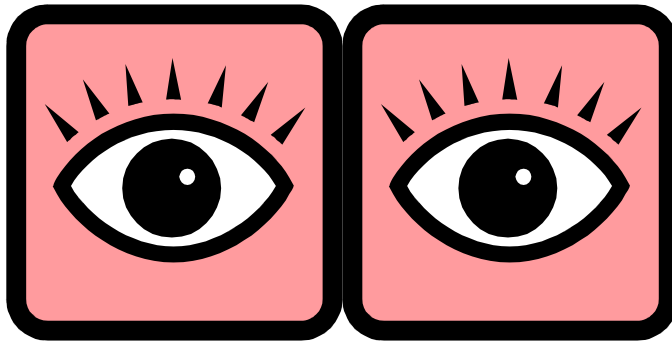
8. Full body: Do all of the above 5 procedures all together at one time.  
Hold on this position for a few seconds.  
Feel the state of muscle tension  
Release the whole body. Feel the muscle tension in your whole body  
from tense to relaxed
9. Enjoy the relaxed state.
10. Count from 5 to 1. Open your eyes and instill the relaxed feelings into your life.
11. Rest for a few minutes and then start other activities.

# Imagery

This is just like “day dreaming”. Through imagery, we could focus our attention into a peaceful, comfortable and beautiful environment.

## Procedures

1. Keep a relaxing posture. Close your eyes.
2. Imagine a situation that you really like.
3. Feel what you can see.....



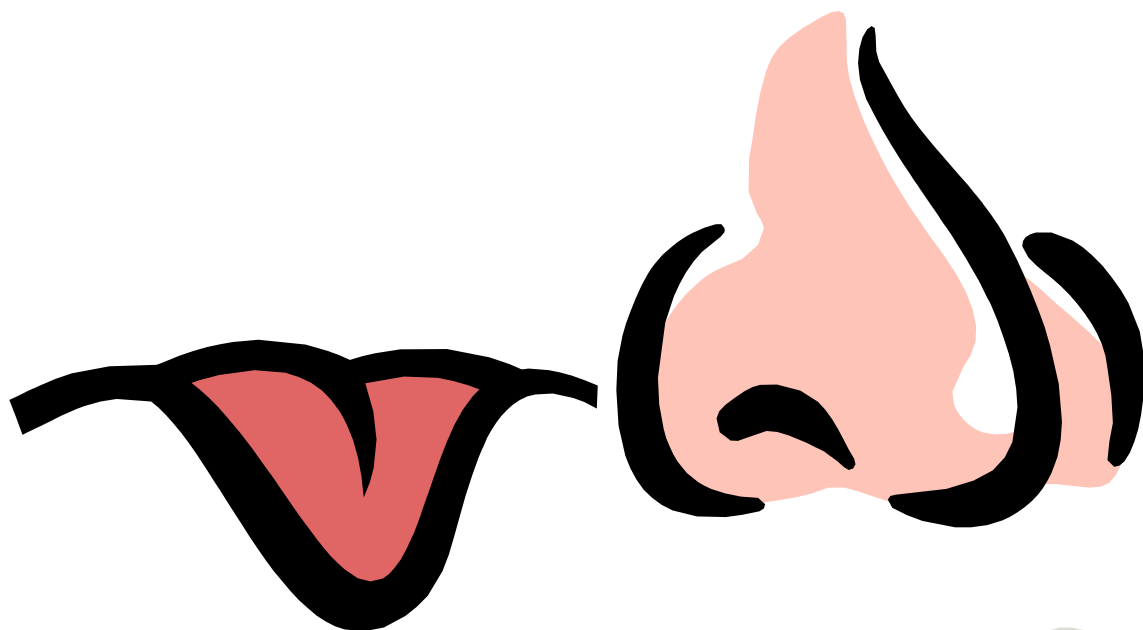
What kinds of things and who can you see?



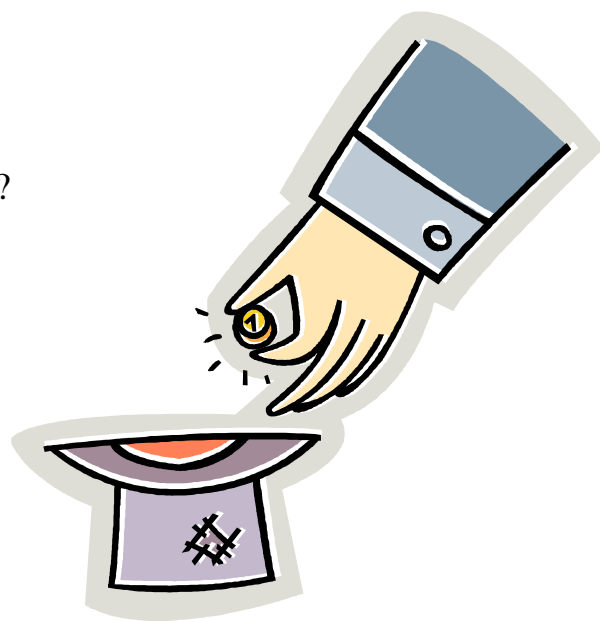
What kinds of sound can you hear?



What kinds of taste/smell can you feel?



What kinds of senses can you feel? Touch?



The environment, location, and things in the situation.....

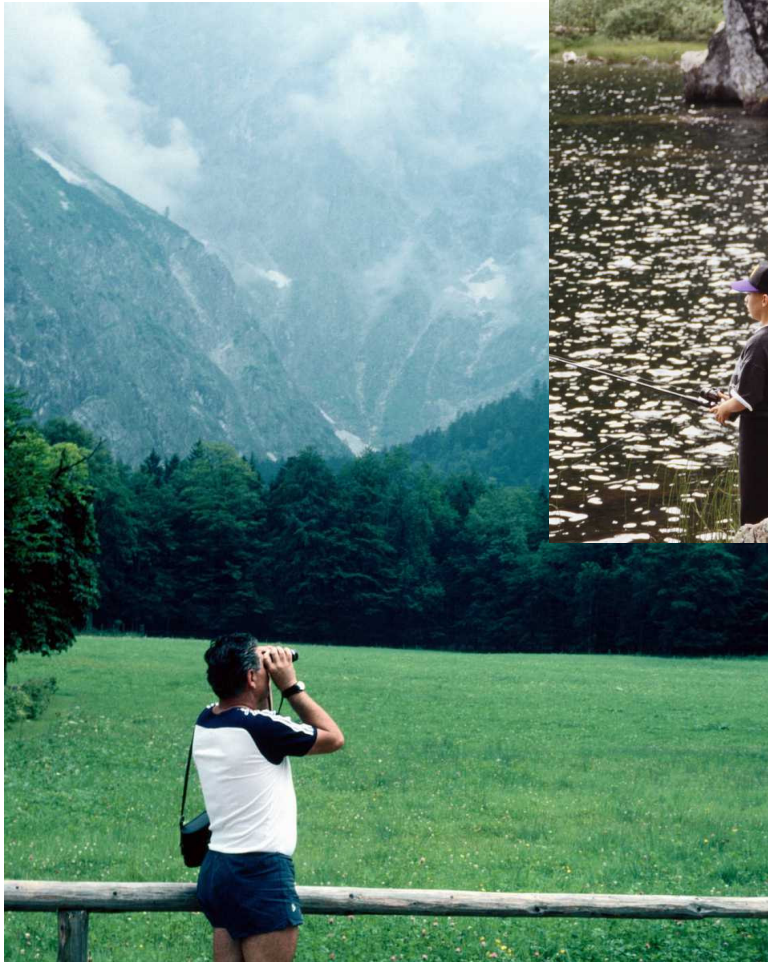


Time of the day (morning, sunset, night.....)





Feel and get into this environment. Enjoy this wonderful moment.  
Open your eyes and instill the relaxed feelings into your life.  
Rest for a few minutes and then start other activities.



## References

1. <http://www.tbetter.com.tw/abdominalrespiration.htm>
2. 東區尤德夫人那打素醫院臨床心理科腹式呼吸法
3. <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~stress/>