Producing the Relaxation Response

Deep Breathing Exercise Instructions

1. Lie or sit in a comfortable, quiet place where you won’t be disturbed.

2. Mentally scan your body for tension and rate yourself on the tension thermometer (0 = totally relaxed; 100 = as tense as you have ever been)

3. Take in a deep breath to the count of 5, hold it for a second or two, then slowly exhale to the same count of 5 – feeling yourself relax all over. Breathe from the low diaphragm, so that you stomach rises as you inhale.

4. Do this two or three times in a slow, unhurried way. If you are just starting to develop your habit of rhythmic breathing, practice this technique 4 times per day for 4 minutes at a time.

5. Attend to your awareness for a few minutes. Say “Now I am aware of …” (complete the sentence with whatever you are aware of at the moment)

6. Play with you awareness by switching back and forth from things inside you to things outside you. Notice the degree to which you are aware of fantasies inside your own head. Do this in an unhurried manner.

7. Let your awareness settle on the sensations of your breathing. Breathe slowly, rhythmically, and deeply. When you become aware of fantasies or other sensations, simply return your attention to your breathing. Be particularly aware of the sensation of relaxation each time you exhale.

8. If you find it helpful in relaxing, think the word “calm” to yourself each time you exhale.

9. After about 15 minutes, begin to rouse yourself by first moving your hands and feet, then you legs and arms, then stretching.

10. Before opening your eyes, give yourself another rating on the tension thermometer.