Stress Reduction Techniques

Relaxation techniques help reduce the severity of stress. Practicing these techniques will allow you to acquire the exercises as “habits” creating a more relaxed, healthy you. Described below are five techniques used for relaxation.

1. The Hand Clench: Clench one fist tightly and hold for five seconds. Slowly release your fist to a comfortable position. Concentrate on each movement when releasing your first. Repeat this exercise and then switch to the other fist.

2. Body Awareness: Sit quietly and comfortably without crossing your arms or legs. Close your eyes and focus on your upper body. Search for any movements, for example your heartbeat, stomach, breathing, or any twitching. Next, scan your body for stillness. Spend a few minutes on this exercise. This exercise is a more advanced relaxation technique. It works best in a quiet environment. Body awareness may help you become aware of any tensions or discomforts in your body.

3. Deep Breathing: Inhale a deep breath slowly through your nose and hold for three seconds. Slowly exhale out your mouth. Pause momentarily between each deep breath - do no more than three to five deep breaths; otherwise, you may get light-headed and pass out. Deep breathing is a quick, easy relaxation technique that can be used several times a day. It’s great for the office, car, or home - any time you feel stress.

4. Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Squeeze muscles individually and hold for 3-5 seconds before releasing. Go from head to toe. Start with facial muscles, then your neck, bring shoulders up to your ears and release. Squeeze muscles in your right arm and then left arm, do your stomach, buttocks, right leg and left leg, do each muscle group twice. When finished, repeat any muscles that still feel tense. This exercise is most effective when done after a hectic day or during a quiet time in the middle of a stressful day.

5. Guided Imagery: Guided imagery is a relaxation technique that takes practice. Don’t be surprised if you fall asleep! Imagine yourself in a calm, relaxing spot; a meadow, beach, ski lodge by the fireplace, etc. Be sure to focus on the sights, smells, and sensations of your chosen calm, relaxing spot. Focus on every detail and picture as many details as you can. Take your time and enjoy your trip!

www.purdue.edu/worklife
49-45461 or 49-47707 (EAP)