



# MUSIC & RELAXATION

Stress has physical and emotional effects on us, and can result in positive and negative feelings and outcomes. Stress of any kind can make any physical symptoms of an illness/disease temporarily worse. Relaxation techniques are helpful to decrease tension that can worsen these symptoms. Relaxation techniques can also help to calm a hyperactive nervous system, helping to manage anxieties, impulses, and/or withdrawal symptoms.

## DURING RELAXATION:

- BLOOD PRESSURE LOWERS
- HEART RATE LOWERS
- LESS FEELINGS OF ANXIETY
- NERVOUS SYSTEM IS LESS ACTIVE
- BODY BECOMES RELAXED, THE MIND REMAINS ALERT (HELPS YOU FEEL REFRESHED, NOT GROGGY AFTERWARDS)

## How does MUSIC assist relaxation?

Research with music-assisted relaxation has been shown to lower heart rate, blood pressure, and even boost one's immune system.

Predictable rhythms of a piece of music can change the pacing of the body's rhythms (breathing, heart rate, blood pressure). This is called entrainment. Music provides structure and movement to assist traditional relaxation techniques and can support imagery-focused relaxation by adding a "soundtrack" to the image.

## Ideas for selecting your own relaxation music:

- Slow tempo (50-70 beats per minute)
- Steady and unaccented, few volume changes
- Minimal dissonance (sounds that are harsh or clashing)
- Music without words, or words with calming messages
- No recognizable melodies
- Music that YOU prefer!

## Relaxation Methods

**Deep Breathing:** Breathe in and breathe out slowly through your nose. Make each breath longer than the one before. Use music as a guide.

**Autogenic Relaxation:** Use words or phrases to encourage a sense of relaxation such as "my legs feel warm and relaxed."

**Imagery:** Imagine seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing or sensing a comforting image to promote relaxation

**Centering/Mindfulness Meditation:** Increasing awareness and focus on self and environment. Acknowledging thoughts and distractions and then letting them drift out of your focus.

## Mobile Applications to Try

- Headspace (Good for centering/mindfulness)
- Calm (Good for imagery and deep breathing)
- Guided Mind (Guided meditation, relaxation and mindfulness)
- Digipill (Helpful for sleep)
- Simply Being
- Relaxing Melodies

## Relaxation vs. Sleep

During your deep sleep period, you tend to dream, which may be stressful. Your body responds with irregular heartbeats, irregular breathing, and your blood pressure fluctuates. You are less in control of your reaction towards stressful events.

During relaxation, the body becomes relaxed, but the mind remains alert. This increases your control of your reaction to certain events when compared to deep sleep.

Plus, **20 minutes of proper relaxation technique can equal up to 2 hours of sleep!**

### Tips to help achieve the "relaxation response"

1. Quiet Environment
  - No distractions
  - Turn off the phone
  - Turn down the lights
  - Choose a time when children are at school or in bed
  - Keep pets out of the room
2. Comfortable position
  - Lie down or recline in a comfortable position
  - Warm/comfortable room temperature
  - Wear comfortable clothing
3. Passive and positive attitude
  - Don't try too hard to relax
  - Don't judge yourself
4. Focus and concentration
  - Close your eyes or focus on a spot in the room
  - Clear your thoughts from the day (or let them go during this time)

## Recommended Resources:

### *Books:*

- Davis, M., Robbins Eshelman, E., & McKay, M. (2008). The relaxation and stress reduction workbook (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- George, M. (1998). Learn to relax: A practical guide to easing tension & conquering stress. Chronicle Books.

### *Recordings:*

- Script & Music:
  - Belleruth Naparstek
  - Nielsen/Miller/Holten: "Healing Blue Sky"
    - (Christiannielsenmusic.com)
- Harp:
  - Hilary Stagg
- Guitar:
  - Mike Howe: "Time Stands Still"
  - Will Ackerman: "Imaginary Roads"
- Piano –
  - Piano Dreamers: A Collection
  - Tranquility Collection (Realmusic.com)
- Bamboo/Native American Flute
  - R. Carlos Nakai: "Earth Spirit", "Canyon Trilogy"
  - Richard Warner: "Quiet Heart, Spirit Wind"
  - Christian Nielsen: "Flow"

### Try relaxation to:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase daytime energy        | <input type="checkbox"/> Fall asleep at night |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manage medication side-effects | <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease anxiety     |