

A holistic way to relax

Introduction

This can be described as "a new way to chill out". The objective of this exercise is to give rest to your mind for at least a few hours so that it can heal itself and neutralise the stress that your mind has accumulated.

This exercise is best done twice a day, i.e. half an hour in the morning soon after getting up and for about an hour in the evening. You could have a longer session on Sunday evenings if possible, when you have finished all the weekend jobs and there is no more work to be done that day apart from the necessary daily activities such as eating meals and getting ready for bed.

You can start with just one or two ideas that you like from the list below and think around them for as long as you feel like. It would be desirable to gradually build up the time incorporating more of these ideas.

It would be a wonderful thing if we had the ability to switch our thoughts (mind) on and off the way we switch our car engine off but it's not in our control to switch off the mind's engine - our mind never rests, it is active even in deep sleep. We cannot rest our minds the way we rest our bodies i.e. stop working and put our feet up. We may not be able to switch off the engine of our minds but we can certainly put it in a neutral gear, and that's when it starts healing itself more than when we are sleeping.

This exercise will take you through certain steps that are the opposite of what happens inside your mind when stress is produced.

There is no need to stop physical activity completely, although there are some restrictions on certain activities as mentioned in the following paragraphs. There is no need to try and empty your mind as it would be almost impossible for you to do so when you start off on this journey. The mind needs an object to focus on all the time. If we stop giving our mind new experiences, it starts dwelling on the past ones - resulting in inner unfolding. The most important aspect of this exercise is - not to

react emotionally, both positively and negatively, and if that is not possible at a given point in time - to see through one's emotional reactivity.

This exercise might help you get connected with your inner stress and, instead of feeling relaxed you might feel more stressed. If you do feel that your stress level is going up during this session it only means that you are moving closer to your goal of working on your stress. Do not do it if you find the stress intolerable. In that case it should be done in the presence of your therapist who is willing to guide you through the session.

When doing a longer session please make a checklist of pending jobs that you have put off until the next day so that they won't bother you during this session.

During this time you are choosing to be on your own and have informed your family members not to disturb you. You have no mental checklist of doing things during this time but would be open to doing anything that comes up at the spur of the moment.

Activities that are prohibited: drinking alcohol or smoking, watching television, listening to radio/music, reading newspapers/magazines/books, talking to a friend over the phone or anything that can create both positive and/or negative emotions..

Permitted activities: breathing exercises or other forms of relaxation (without music) walking (without being curious about the outside world), washing dishes, ironing, gardening, cleaning, routine domestic activities that will not lead to emotional ups and downs, mild stretching exercises, lying or sitting for relaxation.

Imagine that your mind is like a 3 bedroom house, one of the bedrooms is fully cluttered and disorganised - it is the part of the mind that is full of negative emotions such as anxiety, worries, depression, fear, anger, hatred etc.

The second bedroom is very clean, ornate and beautiful, full of fragrance, beautiful paintings, decorations, expensive linen and furniture, delicious food and you are with your loved ones in that room, that is the happy side of your mind.

And the third bedroom is neither good nor bad. It has got nothing extraordinary and you are choosing to stay in this bedroom during this period of this exercise. You are neither trying to tidy the cluttered bedroom nor are you trying to enjoy the comforts

and happiness of the second bedroom. You are choosing to quietly move into the third bedroom. The third bedroom represents the inner peace and tranquillity which is beyond the reach of the worldly emotions of happiness and sadness.

Find a quiet corner of the room , dim the lights, switch off mobile phones, wear loose clothes, feel free to keep changing posture as you please.....

Now start the exercise by saying the following to yourself:

- ∞ I have done all the pending work that needed doing , there is no more work to be done in the next hour or so. This time is mine to relax and get connected with my deeper self.
- ∞ I accept the way I am. I accept fully my race, the colour of my hair and skin, my height and weight, all the imperfections of my appearance, my age, my parents, my siblings, my spouse, my children. I accept my mind and all it's mood swings, I accept all my assets and imperfections.
- ∞ I am choosing to give rest to my mind and my mind can rest to its maximum when it is not making any judgements about people, things and situations. At least for the duration of this exercise, I am choosing not to make any judgements such as good/bad, right/wrong, ugly/beautiful, rich/poor, intelligent/stupid, kind/cruel, nice/nasty about anything etc. What seems to be a good thing now, might turn out to be bad in the long run and vice versa.
- ∞ I can understand my past in terms of historical inevitability - things that have happened so far in my life had to happen that way, they couldn't have happened any other way. That was my destiny, I couldn't have changed things even if I wanted to. I therefore choose not to think about my past during this exercise.
- ∞ I look upon all my past failures as my teacher, they have important lessons for me. I may not have got what I wanted in life but in the process I have learned important lessons of life. These experiences have made me wiser and my life richer.
- ∞ I am choosing not to dwell on my future, my life goals, my desires, my dreams etc. Not thinking about my future plans for a while is not going to cause

irreparable loss to me. I will be okay even if my life goals are not met, there will still be possibilities of happiness. I let go of all my desires for at least the next few hours and it might enable me to experience inner peace and tranquillity. I am therefore choosing to live in the present moment, whatever it has to offer without wanting anything different. I am ok with this feeling that nothing much is happening in my life at the moment.

- ∞ I do not expect anything from this world and I do not have any desire to give anything to any one. Other people's possessions are like dust for me.
- ∞ I want to give rest to my desire to make this world a better place or to make a difference in this world by my actions.
- ∞ I decide to become action oriented rather than result oriented. I am not in full control of the results of my actions, as there are a lot of factors out there that I have no control over. These factors keep influencing the outcome of my actions. I let go of my preoccupation with the results and focus only on my actions. I have stopped worrying about the results. Things happen when the time is ripe, and I do not set any time limits for getting the results. I surrender the results to higher forces if there are any.
- ∞ All things are impermanent , nothing stays for ever. Every thought and every feeling dies it's natural death, if I choose not to participate in it by making judgements about it and emotionally reacting to it. The thoughts and feelings that I am experiencing now are not going to stay in my mind for ever. Sooner or later they will go, just like a guest who stays in a guest house. There is no need to get excited about having a nice thought and no need to get upset about having a bad thought. Just as the owner of the guest house doesn't get excited when a nice person comes to stay in his guest house and doesn't get upset if an unpleasant person stays there as he knows that their stay is temporary.
- ∞ The majority of the thoughts that enter my mind do not accurately represent the reality out there. They need to be fine tuned in order for me to appreciate the reality but I am not choosing to do that job now. For now I am choosing not to make any judgements about them. I make peace with all the thoughts, both

positive and negative, that are there in my mind - I neither try to suppress them nor try to act on them.

- ∞ I choose not to compare myself with others as each individual is unique in many ways. Each one of us has our own failures and successes which happen at different points in time. Comparisons can create a false sense of inferiority or superiority if we are not careful. Right now I want to be myself and celebrate my life. I do not wish to be somebody else.
- ∞ I am for the time being putting aside my desire to be somebody and reach somewhere. I have no desire to leave my footprints in the history of events.
- ∞ I am trying not to wish ill on anybody, I have no intention of causing hurt or harm to anyone. If someone has caused problems to me in the past I see it as my destiny and let nature decide the consequences of their actions. Wanting to see justice done at once is an unnecessary burden that I am carrying on my shoulders.
- ∞ I want to use this time to think about all those people I might have hurt willingly or unwillingly in the past. In my mind I say sorry to them and resolve not to say or do things with the intention of causing hurt to anyone.
- ∞ I think of all those who might have hurt me willingly or unwillingly in the past and I understand this in terms of their imperfections and being human. I pardon them. I am trying to let go of even the justified anger, resentment, bitterness as it hurts me as much as the unjustified ones. By forgiving people I am certainly doing myself a big favour.