



Relaxation Techniques in Pain Management

Relaxation techniques are an important tool for people living with pain. Pain increases muscle tension. When your muscles tighten, this increases the pressure on the nerves, tissues, and your pain site, thus intensifying your pain. Relaxation techniques can help break this pain cycle as they relax the mind and body, reduce tension and anxiety, and will help you feel calmer. The following examples do not require lots of time or energy and become easier through daily practice.

When to do the Techniques

- Sleep difficulties are a common problem that people with pain experience. The stress relief that relaxation provides can improve your sleep patterns.
- To calm the mind and body while undergoing treatments or investigations you find uncomfortable and/or difficult.
- Stress causes muscle tension in your body which increase pain. Relaxation techniques help ease that built-up tension.

Examples of Relaxation Techniques

One basic practice of relaxation is to focus your attention onto your breath, noticing the sensation of air flowing in and out of your lungs. If you become distracted with thoughts, just acknowledge them, and bring your focus back to your breathing. Other methods can include visualisation and using relaxation scripts. Three useful techniques are detailed below.

Relaxed Tummy Breathing

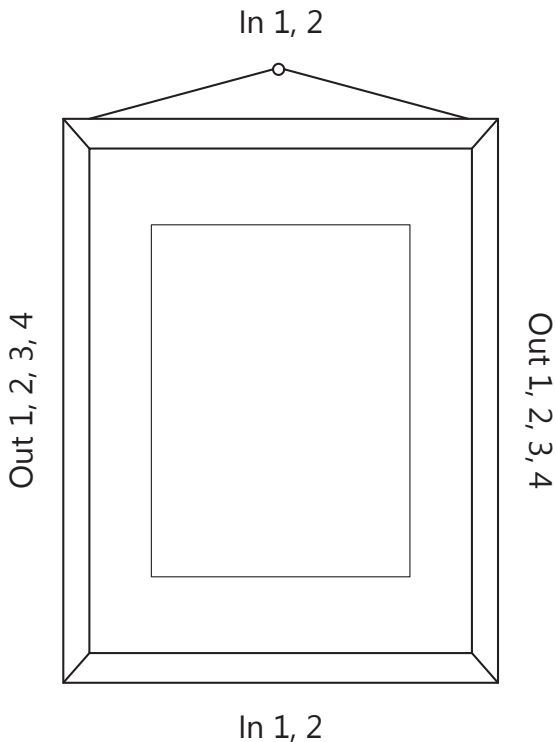
- Firstly, make yourself comfortable, loosen any tight clothing and relax your shoulders
- Notice your breathing without changing its natural pattern
- Now, if you are able, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Place your hands on your stomach and become aware of how it rises and falls on each breath
- When you breathe in, imagine you are breathing into your hands. Relax, take natural steady breaths, remembering to breathe at your own pace.
- As you breathe in, imagine you are breathing in peace. As you breathe out, imagine your tensions are being soothed away.

Repeat for as long as you feel necessary.



Rectangular Breathing

Another method to help focus your attention on your breath is to imagine or even look at a rectangle in the room for example a window or picture. Starting on the shortest side, breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of 2. Then shift your attention to the longest side and breathe out through your mouth for a count of 4. Continue to repeat this (shortest side followed by longest side) until you feel calmer and relaxed.



Tranquillity exercise

- Close your eyes if you wish and think about the word tranquillity
- Say tranquillity three times in your mind
- Think about a colour associated with tranquillity
- Imagine all the things that this colour reminds you of
- Now imagine yourself in a place that brings a feeling of tranquillity
- What does it smell like in this place?
- What can you hear?
- Enjoy this feeling of tranquillity

There are extensive relaxation techniques available, if you require further information about these please contact the Therapy Team.

Contact us

For further information contact our Therapy Team by telephone **01223 675840** or email **livingwell.service@arhc.org.uk** or visit our website.

All information is correct at time of print and may be subject to change. Please visit our website for the most up-to-date information. If you have any feedback or would like this information in a different format or language, please contact us.