

7 Quick & Easy Tension Releasers

Adapted from "Stress Releases" by Dr. Nancy Loving Tubesing, Whole Person Press

All of us accumulate a certain amount of physical tension during the day. Sitting in meetings, standing for too long, long drives, uncomfortable situations, missed calls, and the weather are a few examples of how our bodies constantly readjust to accommodate our environments. We need quick and easy ways to release the tension that accompanies the stress in our lives. Repetition is important so consider choosing a few of the following "tension releasers" to do every day!

3 Deep Breaths. Deep breathing is a great tension releaser. It helps to relax your heart rate and gather your thoughts.

Diaphragmatic Breathing: we need to breathe deeply from our diaphragm versus "chest breathing." Put one hand on your belly and one on your chest. Take a deep breath. The hand on your belly should rise up with your breath and the one on your chest should barely move.

Body Scan. This technique allows you to locate where you are holding tension in your body.

Take 3 deep breaths and then allow your breathing to become relaxed and rhythmic. Next, turn your thoughts inward and focus on each part of your body to assess for tension. Start from your feet and scan upwards ---your feet, ankles, calves, shins, thighs, hips, stomach, chest, back, arms, hands, fingers, shoulders, neck, jaw, mouth, eyes, temples, forehead, and scalp. Zero in on one of your tight spots and tighten that spot further. Exaggerate the tension....and then relax it.

Jaw Relaxation. Many of us hold tension in our jaws.

Yawn! Open your mouth and your throat and catch a yawn! This is a great way to relax your jaw. It stretches out the muscles around the jaw and allows you to take in oxygen that helps to relax other parts of your body.

Eyebrow Raise. This helps to relax your facial muscles.

Raise your eyebrows as high as you can! Bring them way up – and now let them go.

Around the World With Your Eyeballs. We use our eyes all day and we need to relax them – especially with the amount of time spent using computers, tablets and smart phones.

Close your eyes and let them stay closed. With them closed, gently raise both eyeballs up and then gently move them to the right and then gently look down...and then gently move them to the left...and then relax them. Placing your palms over your eyes also helps them to relax.

Shoulder Rolls. These are great if you sit too much and/or hold tension in your shoulder area.

Bring your shoulders forward, then up to your ears as high as they will go...then push them back and then down into a relaxed position.

Self-hypnosis. Hypnosis differs from meditation because a suggestion is involved. A suggestion is always positive and in the present tense. For example, I am free of smoking; I walk for 30 minutes every day; I practice a tension releaser every day. Work with the same suggestion for about 7 days in a row before moving to another one.

My suggestion is:

Do self-hypnosis at least once every day using your suggestion. Here's how:

- Make yourself comfortable.
- Close your eyes get comfortable and relax.
- Notice your breathing. Don't try to hurry it and don't try to slow it down...just notice it. Focus on your breathing and begin to count each breath from 25 down to 1...allowing yourself to relax more and more with each breath you count.
- Begin repeating your suggestion to yourself over and over.
- You'll find the words might break up or become fragmented. This is perfectly fine.
- Visualize yourself carrying out your suggestion.
- When you're ready, simply open your eyes. You will feel rested and refreshed!

Place a check mark in the box next to 1 or 2 tension releasers that you like. Commit to practicing them often throughout the day. Use reminders to practice them such as: "every time I have to fax something, I will take 3 deep breaths," "each time I need to send an email, I will do 3 eyebrow raises," "every 3 hours I will do 3 shoulder rolls," "before a difficult meeting or situation, I take three deep breaths," "every night before bed, I practice my self-hypnosis."

Please contact me with any questions!

Marcia Richards MEd RD MCHES
mrichards@jordanhospital.org
508-732-8983

Mindful Jar

Materials:

Voss bottle works well (type of water sold in supermarkets, etc.)

5 oz clear glue (I used glitter glue for the one pictured)

Food coloring – color of your choice (my glitter glue was already pink, so didn't use food coloring)

Glitter – fine- IT or more

Water

Put 5 oz. of glue in Voss or other 20 oz. jar

Add 1 Tablespoon glitter

Fill with warm water

Add food coloring

Cap and shake

Add more glitter and/or food coloring based on your preference

Concept: the brain floods with cortisol under stress, resulting in frontal cortex reasoning.

Breathing helps cortisol to dissipate – focus on your breathing as you watch the glitter settle to the bottom of the container. You will feel calmer.

I hope you can use this great tool! Marcia



A Taste of Mindfulness

Try this exercise with any meal, a part of a meal, or even one mouthful. You'll find there are many occasions for practicing mindful eating. The idea is to eat with awareness, focusing moment by moment on seeing the food, taking it in, chewing, tasting, and swallowing. It is easier to practice mindful eating if you eat in silence than if you converse with other people. However, even in a group you can eat mindfully if you concentrate on doing so.

- First look at what you are about to eat. What is it? How does it look? Where does it come from? How do you feel about putting this food into your body right now? How does your body feel anticipating eating in this moment?
- Tune in to your breathing as you look at the food, knowing you are about to take it into your mouth and body.
- Feel the food in your mouth. Chew slowly and focus your energy on the food's taste and texture. You might try chewing longer than you normal do to fully experience the process of chewing and tasting.
- Note any impulse you have to rush through this mouthful so that you can go on to the next. Let such impulses remind you that you already have food in your mouth, so you needn't go on to the next bite to have a complete experience of eating. Stay in the present moment with this mouthful, rather than rushing on to the next one.
- Before swallowing, be aware of the intention to swallow. Then feel the actual process of swallowing so you become more conscious of this action as well.
- Approach each mouthful in the same way. Bring awareness to how much you are eating, how full, how your body feels during and after the meal, and whether you are eating in reaction to various events in your life and to the feelings, especially anxiety or depression, that may result from them.

(Mindfulness Meditation: Health Benefits of an Ancient Buddhist Practice,
Mind Body Medicine)