

Laura Mitchell Relaxation

Background:

Laura Mitchell was a physiotherapist who worked in London in the 1960's. She used her knowledge of how muscle groups worked to devise this effective relaxation method.

Many muscles work in opposing pairs, for example the 'biceps' and 'triceps' muscles in your arm. When one contracts the other must relax. So when you bend your arm, your 'biceps' muscle contracts. You enable it to do so, your 'triceps' muscle (at the back of your arm) must relax. It has no choice! The following relaxation method is based on the simple principle of contracting certain muscles to encourage their opposites to relax.

Begin:

Lie down in a comfortable position without crossing your legs. If you can't lie down for any reason you can still do this sitting up. Make sure you are comfortable with your arms and legs uncrossed, your feet flat on the floor, and your arms loosely resting at your sides with your hands gently resting on your lap or on the arms of the chair if it has some.

You can start at your feet and work up or start at the head and work down, it's up to you!

Breathing

Close your eyes and notice your breathing. Don't try to change it, just notice and let your attention softly focus on your breath, gently letting go of any other concerns for a short time and allowing yourself to rest here for a few moments.

Feet

Gently point your toes away from your body if you are lying down, or push your feet into the floor if sitting. (stop if you experience cramp and bring your toes in the opposite direction towards your body) Hold this position while you count to 5, and then relax. Notice how your muscles feel... and allow your muscles to rest in the position where they naturally return to.

Repeat.

Legs

Roll your knees apart a little way.

Hold while you count to 5 again, then relax.

Repeat.

Buttocks

Clench your buttocks.

Hold while you count to 5 again, then relax. Remember at each stage to notice how your muscles feel... and allow your muscles to rest in the position where they naturally return to.

Repeat.

Back/ abdomen

If lying down, push the small of your back into the floor.

Hold while you count to 5 again, then relax.

Repeat.

If sitting: pull your abdominal muscles in and sit upright.

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Hold while you count to 5 again, then relax.
Repeat.

Shoulders

Pull your shoulders down, away from your head, and slightly back.
Hold for a count of 5, then release.
Repeat.

Elbows

Move your elbows slightly away from your sides. Hold for a count of 5, then relax.
repeat.

Hands

Stretch your fingers to make them long, hold for a count of 5, then release.
Repeat.

Eyebrows

Raise your eyebrows as though surprised. Hold for a count of 5, then release.
Repeat.

Jaw

Keeping your mouth closed slowly stretch your lower jaw downwards.
Hold for a count of 5, then release.
Repeat.

Allow yourself to relax. Notice how your body feels.

Notice your breathing.

Imagine you are somewhere that is peaceful for you...
imagine the sights... sounds... smells...

Allow yourself to rest here a while.

When you are ready, slowly bring yourself back to the present moment. Get up slowly.

Once you have learned the technique you can adapt it and do those parts that are more suitable for you. For example the shoulder relaxation is helpful even if you are at work, especially if your work involves sitting at a computer for long periods.

It is always beneficial to go through the whole routine at least once a day, so your muscles remember the process of letting go and release, and your body doesn't hold on to tension.



This resource was provided courtesy of Ruth Hadikin Associates. Coaching, Training & Development. One to one support for stressed-out professionals. Bespoke training in stress awareness, resiliency, emotional intelligence and communication. Specialist advice and consultancy on workplace bullying. Ruth is Author of "The Bullying Culture" and "Effective Coaching in Healthcare"
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