

# Relaxation for Health and Well-being

**Department of Psychological Medicine  
Community & Therapy Services**

**This leaflet is supplementary to the Relaxation CD you received from the Department of Psychological Medicine. It explains how to use your Relaxation CD and describes other methods of relaxation you can use to help you stay calm and manage stress.**



# Information for patients and visitors

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## Relaxation

Relaxation can help to relieve the symptoms of stress. It can help you to stay calm and to take a step back from stressful situations. There are different relaxation techniques you can learn. This leaflet tells you how to use your Relaxation CD and also describes two other relaxation techniques: controlled breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.

### 1. How to Use Your Relaxation CD

The relaxation exercise which is recorded on your CD will help you to relax your muscles, slow your breathing and focus on pleasant, calming imagery:

- Before you listen to your CD settle down on a comfortable chair, couch or bed, so that your head is supported
- Take your shoes off, if possible, and loosen tight clothing. Remove your glasses if you wear them
- Do not drink, smoke or chew anything as this will distract you
- Practice makes perfect; if you find it difficult to relax at first, persevere
- Make a regular 'relaxation slot' in your daily routine, that way the relaxation response becomes part of your normal way of life
- When you have become used to doing the relaxation exercise, you may like to use the CD to help you drift off to sleep
- This relaxation exercise can be done by more than one person, so you can share the relaxation and peace with a partner or close friend
- **Never play the CD while you are in a car**

### 2. Controlled Breathing

Controlled breathing is another useful relaxation technique, here's how to do it:

#### a. Sit upright

Sitting upright is usually better than lying down, or 'slouching', as it can increase the capacity of your lungs to fill with air.

#### b. Try to relax your neck, shoulders and upper chest muscles

It is best to take the weight off your shoulders by supporting your arms on the side arms of a chair, or on your lap.

#### c. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth in a steady slow rhythm.

Try to keep your mouth closed when you breathe in through your nose. As you breathe out through your mouth, pucker or 'purse' your lips (as if you are about to whistle). This gives slight resistance to the outflow of air. Try to make your out breath twice as long as your in breath. This helps to empty your lungs of old air, and to make as much room in your lungs for fresh



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oxygen-rich air. To do this you may find it helpful to slowly count 'one, two' as you breathe in, and 'one, two, three, four' as you breathe out.

### **d. If possible, mainly use your lower chest muscle (diaphragm) to breathe**

Your diaphragm is the big muscle under the lungs. It pulls the lungs downwards, which expands the airways to allow air to flow in. When we become breathless we tend to forget to use this muscle, and often use the muscles at the top of the chest and our shoulders instead. Each breath is more shallow if you use these upper chest muscles. So, you tend to breathe faster and feel more breathless if you use your upper chest muscles rather than your diaphragm.

You can check if you are using your diaphragm by feeling just below your breastbone (sternum) at the top of your tummy (abdomen). If you give a little cough, you can feel the diaphragm push out here. If you hold your hand here you should feel it move out as you inhale and move back in as you exhale.

### **e. To help you to relax further you can visualise, in your mind's eye, the movement of air as you breathe**

Visualise in your mind's eye how the air moves in through your nose and down into your lungs. Think about the image of your lungs expanding gently and then slowly deflating as the air moves up and out slowly through your mouth.

## **3. Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

This is a relaxation technique which involves stretching different muscles in turn and then relaxing them to release tension from the body and relax your mind. Set aside 15 to 20 minutes for this exercise with no interruptions or distractions.

Find a warm, quiet place with no distractions. Get completely comfortable, either sitting or lying down. Close your eyes and begin by focusing on your breathing; breathing slowly and steadily, as described above.

If you have pain in certain muscles, or if there are muscles that you find it difficult to focus on, spend more time on relaxing other parts.

Aim to learn the difference between tight and relaxed muscles. Try to concentrate on the feeling in the muscle as it goes from tight to relaxed.

### **Forehead**

Pull your eyebrows together and feel the tension, then gradually let your forehead smooth out.

### **Eyes**

Screw your eyes up tight then gradually let them smooth out, leaving your eyes closed, feeling your eyeballs sink and your eyelids droop. Let them get really heavy.



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## **Jaw**

Bite your back teeth together, then gradually ease off, and let your jaw get heavy.

Now open your mouth wide enough to stretch the hinges of your jaw and then release the tension and feel the relaxation in your mouth and jaw.

## **Neck and Shoulders**

Hunch your shoulders and hold for 5 seconds then gradually let them settle down, notice the difference between the tension and the relaxation in your neck and shoulders.

## **Hands and arms**

Clench your fists, and tense your arms out straight; feel the tightness in your hands and arms, hold for 5 seconds then slowly relax them. Let as much tension go as possible.

## **Tummy**

Pull in your tummy tight then gradually let it go feeling it relax.

## **Thighs**

Push your heels down hard against the floor, feeling the tightness in your thighs, then gradually let that go.

## **Calves**

Point your toes and feel the tension in your calves, then gradually let that tightness and tension go.

## **Feet**

Curl your toes downward feel the tension in your toes and feet then gradually relax them again.

## **And finally**

Remember that learning relaxation skills takes time, so be patient with yourself. Think of what you might say to a good friend who is trying to learn a new skill and say that to yourself. It is remarkable how many people treat themselves as if they were their own worst enemy; instead, learn to become your own best friend.

Take time to find out about the little things that make you feel good. It could be wearing freshly laundered clothes, or snuggling into a soft, warm cardigan; it could be stroking the fur of a pet, having a chat with a friend or neighbour, or sitting in the garden with a cup of tea. These little things cost nothing and can set the mood for the whole day.

Learn ways of being kind to yourself. Maybe you like to soak in a warm, scented bath, soothing away the stresses and aches of the day; or maybe listening to a favourite piece of music is a good way for you to relax and be at peace with the world. We are all different, so find out what works for you.

Enjoy your journey towards a more relaxed and contented way of living; you deserve to feel at ease, and success is within your reach.



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**Department of Psychological Medicine**  
**Cromwell Primary Care Centre**  
**Cromwell Road**  
**Grimsby**  
**DN31 2BH**  
**Tel No: 01472 875287**

## Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

### For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

### For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:

[nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

## Confidentiality

Information on NHS patients is collected in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (e.g. providing care and treatment, managing and planning the NHS, training and educating staff, research etc.).

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Information will only ever be shared with people who have a genuine need for it (e.g. your GP or other professionals from whom you have been receiving care) or if the law requires it, for example, to notify a birth.

Please be assured however that anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.

## Zero Tolerance - Violent, Threatening and Abusive Behaviour

The Trust and its staff are committed to providing high quality care to patients within the department. However, we wish to advise all patients / visitors that the following inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated:

- Swearing
- Threatening / abusive behaviour
- Verbal / physical abuse

The Trust reserves the right to withdraw from treating patients whom are threatening / abusive / violent and ensuring the removal of those persons from the premises.



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All acts of criminal violence and aggression will be notified to the Police immediately.

## Risk Management Strategy

The Trust welcomes comments and suggestions from patients and visitors that could help to reduce risk.

Perhaps you have experienced something whilst in hospital, whilst attending as an outpatient or as a visitor and you felt at risk.

Please tell a member of staff on the ward or in the department you are attending / visiting.

## Moving & Handling

The Trust operates a Minimal Lifting Policy, which in essence means patients are only ever lifted by nursing staff in an emergency situation.

Patients are always encouraged to help themselves as much as possible when mobilising, and if unable to do so, equipment may be used to assist in their safe transfer.

If you have any questions regarding moving and handling of patients within the Trust, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department you are visiting.

## Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

**Diana Princess of Wales Hospital**  
Scartho Road  
Grimsby  
01472 874111

**Scunthorpe General Hospital**  
Cliff Gardens  
Scunthorpe  
01724 282282

**Goole & District Hospital**  
Woodland Avenue  
Goole  
01405 720720

[www.nlg.nhs.uk](http://www.nlg.nhs.uk)

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