



What can you do to relax?

You can use these exercises when you're feeling stressed, busy or worried. Don't worry if one technique doesn't work for you – try it a few times and, if it doesn't feel effective, move on to a different exercise.

Remember:

- You can use relaxation techniques regularly, or every once in a while.
- Try and make some time in your day to try these exercises. Don't treat relaxing like a task that needs to be completed – try to think of it as giving yourself some time and space.
- Find somewhere quiet and comfortable where you won't be interrupted, if you can.
- Make sure your surroundings are the right temperature – it can be hard to relax if you're too hot or cold.

Relax your body

When you're stressed, your muscles might be tight and tense. This exercise helps you notice tension in your body and relax your muscles.

What do I need?

somewhere comfortable to sit or lie down and space where you won't be interrupted

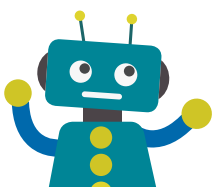
What do I do?

Lie down or sit with your back straight and your feet on the floor. Close your eyes or focus on a spot in the distance. Start by clenching your toes as much as you can for a few seconds then releasing them. Notice the difference between the two feelings.

Match this to your breathing. Tense your muscle as you take a deep breath in, and relax as you breathe out. Move up your body to your thighs, your stomach and all the way to your shoulders and hands, clenching and relaxing each muscle in turn. Take time to notice any parts of your body that feel tense, tight or tired. You can repeat if you still feel tense. Take a moment to relax, then slowly and gently begin to move. When you feel ready, you can stand up slowly.

Alternatives

Instead of tensing your muscles, try placing something warm on each part of your body in turn.





Get creative

Colour, creativity and movement can help you feel relaxed by: distracting you from worrying thoughts giving you an outlet and focus for your emotions stimulating your senses.

What do I need?

A table or desk some blank paper some crayons, coloured pencils or pens some sticky tape or masking tape to hold your paper down (optional)

What do I do?

Make sure you are sitting comfortably with your feet firmly on the floor, your back straight and your shoulders relaxed. Take your paper and crayon, and draw a circle that fills most of the page – don't worry if it's a bit wonky! Now keep drawing. You could keep going over the circle, or fill it with a pattern, but try not to let your crayon leave the page. Don't worry about creating a finished picture, just keep going. Take time to focus on what you're drawing. Focusing on these sensations can help you quieten your mind, like meditation. Once you have done this for a few minutes, try using a different colour or pattern.

Alternatives

If you're focusing too much on getting the pattern right, try using your other hand. If you find it hard to get started, try using a colouring book.

Take a mindful walk

Spending time in green spaces can reduce stress, anxiety and depression and gentle exercise is a good way of relaxing.

What do I need?

Just yourself and somewhere to walk – try a local park, woodland, nature reserve or just your garden.

What do I do?

It might seem obvious how to go for a walk, but try following these steps to make the most of a mindful walk in nature. Find a green space. When you get there, stop for a moment and take a deep breath. Start walking slowly – try not to focus on getting somewhere quickly. Really focus on each step you take. Notice which part of your foot touches the ground first, and feel the transfer of weight through your foot. Think about the rest of your body – how are you holding your arms? Notice the ground underneath your feet. Is it grass or earth? Does the ground feel soft? Listen to the sounds around you – can you hear birdsong, or wind rustling through the leaves?

Alternatives

If you can't go to a green space, you can try opening your window and noticing what's around you. Notice any clouds in the sky, or trees and plants you can see. Can you feel rain, wind or sun on your skin? You could try looking after a plant. Spend time focusing on its scent, shape and texture. You could try picking up some of the soil and focusing on how it feels.

