

*When you are relaxed you are a better student. You can think more clearly, remember better and are a more creative problem solver.*

### 5 minute exercises

Lie on your back in a comfortable position and put one hand on your abdomen. Close your eyes and focus all of your attention on the movement of your hand. If you are breathing properly it will rise with every inhalation and fall with every exhalation. For the next five minutes think of nothing else than the rising and falling of your hand. If your mind starts to wander, just gently bring it back to your breathing. Notice how much calmer you feel after just five minutes!

Sit in a comfortable chair. Exhale loudly through your mouth to get started. Breathe in through your nose for a count of four. Hold your breath for a count of two and notice the exhilaration from the fresh clean air. Exhale through your mouth for a count of six. Pause for a count of two. Notice the relaxation from letting go of the things you no longer need to hold on to. Start the cycle over again.

For more exercises, check out one of the many tapes or CD's from the Wellness Resource Center for free for 2 weeks

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## UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND COUNSELING SERVICES

[www.uww.edu/uahcs](http://www.uww.edu/uahcs)

Corner of Prairie and Starin  
Division of Student Affairs, UW-Whitewater

### Hours

Monday-Friday 8:00 - 4:30; except state holidays

### Health Services 472-1300

- \* Examinations and treatment for illnesses and minor injuries
- \* Laboratory tests and medications
- \* Allergy injections and immunizations
- \* Pelvic exam and Pap test
- \* Contraceptives
- \* Wisconsin Family Planning Waiver Program (Forward card)
- \* STD and HIV antibody testing
- \* Men's health needs
- \* Smoking cessation
- \* Phone consultations with RN
- \* Rehabilitation and physical therapy for students with disabilities

### Counseling Services 472-1305

- \* Individual counseling for many concerns, including...
  - \* Relationships
  - \* Depression
  - \* Self-esteem
  - \* Values clarification
  - \* Alcohol and other drugs use
  - \* Sexual assault and abuse
  - \* Decision-making
  - \* Anxiety
  - \* Sexual orientation
  - \* Stress
- \* Group and couple counseling
- \* Consultations with staff
- \* Referrals to community agencies
- \* Crisis intervention
- \* Practicum training site

### Wellness Services 472-1300 ext. 2244

- \* Lobby Resource Center
- \* Royal Purple articles
- \* Bulletin board kits
- \* Healthy U newsletter
- \* Web site
- \* Posters
- \* Wellness fairs
- \* Educational presentations

### Employee Assistance Program 472-1305

- \* Confidential assistance and referral for employees with concerns such as:
  - \* Stress
  - \* Depression
  - \* Finances
  - \* Alcohol and other drug use
  - \* Troubled coworkers
  - \* Marriage/family
  - \* Health

### 24-Hour Emergency help:

### 911 Whitewater Rescue Squad

262-472-1060 Sexual Assault Response

Team

262-741-3200 or 1-800-365-1587 Crisis Line

# THE ART OF RELAXATION

## ***The Four Elements of Relaxation***

### **1. Quiet Environment**

Choose a quiet environment with as few distractions as possible. Soothing music can be helpful. If you cannot escape noise, try to mask it with a steady bland noise, such as a fan.

### **2. A Mental Device**

Since it is impossible to think of nothing, try to narrow your focus to one simple thought. Try repeating a simple word or focusing on a candle flame or the sounds and sensations you are experiencing. When distracting thoughts enter the mind, they should simply be disregarded.

### **3. A Passive Attitude**

You cannot force yourself to relax you can only allow yourself to relax. Don't try to make yourself relax, just let go.

### **4. A Comfortable Position**

Sit in a comfortable chair in as restful a position as possible. A recliner is perfect for this. The purpose is to reduce muscular effort to a minimum. The head may be supported; the arms should be uncrossed and supported as well. The shoes may be removed and the feet propped up several inches, if desired. Loosen all tight-fitting clothing and jewelry. You may also lie down, if you prefer. Try to keep your spine straight.

## ***What Happens When You Become Relaxed?***

Because of changes in the autonomic nervous system and endocrine system the following changes occur:

- Decreased heart rate
- Decreased blood clotting time
- Improved digestion
- Decreased breathing rate
- Decreased blood pressure
- Decreased muscle tension
- Constriction of the pupils
- Increased saliva
- Improved immune functioning
- Decreased blood sugar production
- Decreased sweating
- Decreased perception of pain

Simultaneously your mind quiets and you are able to think more clearly. It is easier to focus your attention. You develop feelings of safety, confidence and peacefulness.

### ***Specific techniques***

**Deep breathing** – Slow, deep breathing helps to focus your attention, stretch your back, chest and abdominal muscles and oxygenate the blood to increase both alertness and peace of mind.

**Exercise** – Vigorous physical exercise for 20 minutes or more releases physical tension and stress hormones, increases endorphins and clears the mind while creating an often-needed change of pace in a sedentary day.

**Guided Imagery** – The body responds to whatever the mind perceives. If you watch a scary movie you will tense up. If you imagine a safe, supportive environment you will relax.

**Laughing** – Laughing exercises your muscles, increases the depth of your breathing, increases endorphins, distracts you from your problems and releases tension while leaving you in a positive frame of mind.

**Massage** - Stroking and soothing the muscles not only reduces muscle tension, but also relaxes the mind and creates a soothing sense of nurturance.

**Meditation** – Meditation involves either opening up to sensory experiences or reducing sensory stimulation. It produces a state of quiet alertness.

**Progressive muscle relaxation** – Alternatively tensing and releasing specific muscle groups teaches you to identify muscle tension when it occurs and to experience the sensation of letting go of tension.

**Stretching** – Stretching muscles on a regular basis keeps them in better condition and releases the energy and chemicals that cause pain.

**Tai Chi** - A series of movements are done in a focused, slow, graceful manner coordinated with deep breathing. This creates a feeling of relaxation, warmth and security resulting in a state of energized calm alertness.

**Yoga** – The combination of deep breathing, stretching and focusing make yoga a good relaxation technique.