Take a Breath

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Key Questions

- I have heard that deep breathing is one of the best ways to relax. How does this work?
- Is abdominal breathing more effective for relaxation than chest breathing?

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How Breathing Works

- Primary purpose of breathing is to supply the body with oxygen and to remove excess carbon dioxide
- Two basic ways of breathing
  - Abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing
  - Chest or thoracic breathing

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Culture Connection: Breath of Life

- *Pranayama* is the control of breath, from the Sanskrit *prana*, or life energy, and *ayam*, or control
  - Yoga teaches that interruption of the flow of prana by such factors as stress, toxins, or improper diet can have a harmful effect on physical, mental, and spiritual health

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Benefits of Relaxation Breathing

- Deep, meditative breathing can have a significant effect on your physical and mental state
  - Conscious breathing practices have long been taught in childbirth preparation classes
    - Anxiety intensifies pain, and breathing consciously helps to relieve tension and anxiety and reduce pain
  - Deep breathing can reduce the frequency of hot flashes associated with menopause

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Research Highlight: Using Breathing Techniques to Ease Test Anxiety

- Meta analysis of studies on anxiety and breathing
  - Concluded that simple relaxation is as helpful as more complex treatments
- One of the most basic relaxation techniques available to individuals is breathing
  - Used optimally before and during anxiety-provoking situation to clear the mind, relax the body, and maintain the body's biochemical balance

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Breathing and Relaxation

- Nearly every stress management technique that is devised specifically to reduce sympathetic nervous activity includes a breathing component

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How to Do Relaxation Breathing

- Breathing exercises require no special equipment
- Distractions should be kept to a minimum
- Breathing exercises can be particularly beneficial in the afternoon or just before going to sleep
- Because some breathing techniques alter brainwave activity, avoid them while driving or operating heavy machinery

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FYI: Breathing Break

- When you flick on your computer
  - Your breathing rate goes up 30%
  - Your blinking rate goes way down
  - You tend to tighten your arms and shoulders without knowing it

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Breathing Exercises (1 of 2)

- Simple diaphragmatic breathing
- Restful breathing
- Breath counting
- Reduced respirations technique
- Alternate nostril breathing
- Right nostril breathing (energy)
- Left nostril breathing (calmness)
- Full breathing

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Breathing Exercises (2 of 2)

- Visualization breathing
- Command breathing
- Pelvic tilt with diaphragmatic breathing
- Breathing while stretching

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Conclusion

- Conscious breathing is a component of nearly every relaxation technique

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Autogenics

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Key Questions

- I've never heard of autogenics. What is this, and how does it work?
- Can anyone experience the benefits of relaxation from autogenics if they just try hard enough?
- Why do my arms and legs feel warm and heavy when I do autogenics?

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Autogenics

- Self-directed relaxation using suggestions to create feelings such as warmth and heaviness in the body
  - Similar to hypnosis, in that both involve the use of suggestion

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Background of Autogenic Training (1 of 2)

- Developed in the early 20th century by the brain physiologist Oskar Vogt
  - Noticed that self-hypnosis reduced tension, fatigue, and headaches
- Johannes Schultz continued Vogt's work
  - Those who were able to attain deep relaxation through hypnosis experienced two pleasant physical sensations
    - Heaviness
    - Warmth, primarily in their arms and legs

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Background of Autogenic Training (2 of 2)

- Schultz developed a system designed to activate the parasympathetic nervous system using suggestions focusing on warmth and heaviness

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How Autogenics Works

- The pleasant feeling of warmth in the extremities can be explained physiologically as vasodilation
  - Response to parasympathetic nervous system activation

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Benefits of Autogenics (1 of 2)

- Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of autogenic training on a variety of stress-related symptoms
- Autogenics relieves headaches including tension headaches and migraines
- Reduces anxiety related to cancer
- Effective in dealing with insomnia and muscle tension

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Benefits of Autogenics (2 of 2)

- Improves performance of pilots
  - Also decreases physiological arousal during emergency flying conditions

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FYI: Case Study in Autogenics

- K.S. had severely disturbing nightmares almost every night as a result of a horrible automobile accident
- Following autogenic training, the frequency and severity of the post-traumatic nightmares dropped significantly
  - Ceased altogether by the end of the treatment

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Research Highlight: Meta-Analysis of Autogenic Training (1 of 2)

- In meta analysis, autogenic training was found to be beneficial for a variety of illnesses, including:
  - Tension headache; migraine headache; mild-to-moderate essential hypertension; coronary heart disease; bronchial asthma; somatoform pain disorder; Raynaud's disease; anxiety disorders; mild-to-moderate depression; functional sleep disorders

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Research Highlight: Meta-Analysis of Autogenic Training (2 of 2)

- Autogenic training also has a beneficial effect on mood, cognitive performance, quality of life, and physiological variables

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Experiencing Autogenics

- Create favorable conditions
- Use an autogenics script

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Conclusion

- Autogenics is self-directed relaxation using suggestion
- Autogenic training is beneficial for a variety of stress-related conditions, including mood and quality of life

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Progressive Relaxation

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Key Questions

- I don't understand how progressive muscle relaxation can work. How can tensing my muscles make me feel more relaxed?
- What happens when a muscle contracts?

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FYI: The Birth of PMR

- Developed by Edmund Jacobson
  - Studying the startle reflex
  - Discovered that deeply relaxed students demonstrated no obvious startle response

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Progressive Relaxation

- Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) techniques are designed specifically to reduce muscle tension through focused attention

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Background

- Physician Edmund Jacobson found that most of his patients had no idea that they had excess muscle tension in various places in their bodies
  - When they were asked to consciously flex these tensed-up areas, and then consciously relieve that tension, the contracting muscles became relaxed
    - Jacobson understood that a muscle cannot contract and relax at the same time

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Muscle Physiology

- Each skeletal muscle is composed of many muscle fibers (cells), each of which has the ability to contract or relax
  - A motor unit consists of a single motor nerve and all the muscle fibers to which it sends impulses (see Figure 19.1)
  - Muscle contraction is based on the all-or-none principle
    - A muscle fiber contracts completely or not at all

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Muscles and Relaxation

- Many muscles in the body remain in a chronically contracted state
  - Never receive the signal to relax

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FYI: What Is Bruxism?

- Bruxism is teeth grinding
  - People who frequently grind their teeth are more likely to feel stressed out at work
  - Women are more likely than men to say that they grind their teeth and that their jobs are stressful
  - Dentists can fit a mouth guard to protect teeth

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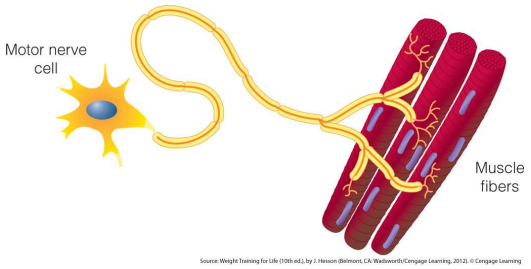
Motor Unit



Source: Weight Training for Life (10th ed.), by J. Hesson (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2012). © Cengage Learning

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How PMR Works

- Progressive muscle relaxation activates the parasympathetic nervous system in a consciously directed way

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Benefits of Progressive Relaxation

- Effectively turns off the stress response and induces relaxation
  - Many of the adverse physical, mental, and emotional conditions associated with chronic stress have been reduced or eliminated with regular practice of PMR
  - Helpful in dealing with insomnia and post-traumatic stress disorder

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Research Highlight: PMR for Anxiety

- Anxiety can be reduced through relaxation exercises such as PMR
  - Helpful for students who have high anxiety and the poor academic achievement that often is associated with it

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Research Highlight: Curbing Late Night Hunger through Relaxation (1 of 2)

- Relaxation may be an important component of treatment for the condition known as night eating syndrome
  - Characterized by a lack of appetite in the morning, consumption of 50% or more of daily food intake after 6:00 p.m., and difficulty falling and/or staying asleep

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Research Highlight: Curbing Late Night Hunger through Relaxation (2 of 2)

- Relaxation training significantly reduced stress, anxiety, and salivary cortisol immediately after each session
  - Also associated with significantly higher morning and lower afternoon and evening ratings of hunger

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How to Do Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Active progressive muscle relaxation
  - Tense a group of muscles fairly tightly—to about 70–80% of a maximum contraction
  - Once they are contracted sufficiently, hold them in the state of tension for up to 8 seconds
  - Then immediately and consciously release those muscles for 15 to 30 seconds

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Culture Connection: A More Western Way to Relax

- Meditation, guided imagery, and deep breathing have their roots in Eastern philosophy and practice
- Progressive muscle relaxation is rooted in Western culture

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Incremental Muscle Relaxation (1 of 2)

- First, tense the muscles maximally to what feels like 100% contraction
- After 5 to 10 seconds of contracting maximally, relax that muscle group completely for 15 to 30 seconds
- Contract the same muscles a second time, this time contracting to what feels like about 50% of maximal contraction

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Incremental Muscle Relaxation (2 of 2)

- After 5 to 10 seconds of holding this contraction, relax the muscles completely for 15 to 30 seconds
- On a third contraction of the same muscles, flex the muscles at no more than 10% of maximal contraction
- Hold this contraction for 5 to 10 seconds, and then relax the muscles completely for 15 to 30 seconds

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Passive Progressive Relaxation (1 of 2)

- Progresses through the body using a technique called body scan
- Allows individuals to develop a focused, concentrated awareness of the body
- Scanning serves two purposes
  - As a means of checking to see if tension exists
  - As a device to enable the individual to feel in touch with his/her body as a whole

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Passive Progressive Relaxation (2 of 2)

- Person is guided to put his or her attention on a specific area of the body and simply tune in to what is happening in that part of the body
  - Then progress to next part of body

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Conclusion

- Many muscles in the body remain in a chronically contracted state
  - Do not receive the signal from the nervous system that the threat has passed and it is safe to relax
- Relaxation techniques reduce muscle tension and induce relaxation

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Guided Imagery: Using Your Imagination

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Key Questions

- How does guided imagery work to help me relax?
- Can I still practice guided imagery if I'm not a "visual" person?
- How are hypnosis and guided imagery alike and how are they different?

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Background

- Virtually nothing exists in our experiences that we do not imagine in some way beforehand
  - When we fear something, our worry and fear produce images that we create about future events
    - You can learn to consciously use your imagination to influence your experience in a positive manner

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The Mind and How It Works

- Hypnosis: a state of attentive, focused concentration with suspension of some peripheral awareness
  - Characterized by extreme suggestibility, relaxation, and heightened imagination
  - Creates a state of deep relaxation and quiets the mind
  - Seems to affect how the brain communicates with the body through nerve impulses, hormones, and body chemicals

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FYI: Mesmerizing Idea

- The father of modern hypnotism is Franz Mesmer
  - Believed hypnosis to be a mystical force flowing from the hypnotist into the subject
    - Called it animal magnetism

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The Conscious and Subconscious Minds (1 of 2)

- See Figure 20.1
- Whatever the conscious mind focuses on, believes, thinks, and directs is what the subconscious mind responds to
- When a person is hypnotized, the conscious mind moves off to the side
  - Subconscious mind simply does as hypnotist tells it to do (Figure 20.2)

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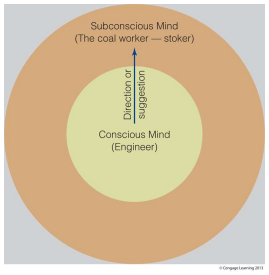
The Conscious and Subconscious Minds (2 of 2)



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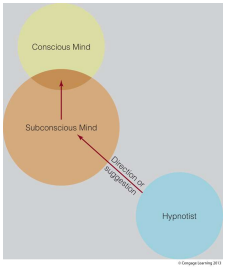
The Conscious and Subconscious Minds during Hypnosis



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Imagery and Visualization

- Research has found a correlation between the ability to use imagery and the ability to be hypnotized
  - Imagery is a flow of thoughts that includes sensory qualities from one or more of the senses
  - Visualization relates more specifically to using the imagination to picture or see a place or thing

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Uses of Imagery

- Improvement of performance skills
- Improvement of confidence and positive thinking
- Tactical rehearsal and problem solving
- Performance review and analysis
- Control arousal and anxiety

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Culture Connection: Seeing Sacred Symbols

- Visualizing sacred symbols is a spiritual ritual used in many cultures
  - Hindus and Buddhists use a mandala, a graphic representation depicting the universe
  - Can help individuals connect with their deep subconscious awareness and create a meditative state

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Relaxation Guided Imagery: What Is It?

- Technique used to connect with the subconscious mind in a way that will activate the relaxation response
  - Using the imagination in a directed way toward a specific image, scene, or sensation
  - Similar to hypnosis in that what we imagine can be translated into changes in our physiology, biochemistry, and, as a result, our health outcomes

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Benefits of Guided Imagery

- Athletes, performers, businesspeople, and use the imagination to help them produce desired outcomes
- Improves health outcomes for a myriad of medical conditions, including cancer, HIV, migraine headaches, hypertension, and post-surgical healing
- Used successfully to aid recovery from chemical dependencies

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Research Highlight: Guided Imagery for Youngsters with Asthma

- Guided imagery produces a noticeable decrease in feelings of anxiety, which tend to trigger asthma attacks

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Guided Imagery as a Technique for Relaxation

- A typical RGI session begins with some brief and simple relaxation exercises
- Then imagination is used to create a relaxing scene
  - Walking along the beach with gentle ocean waves caressing your legs and feet
  - Walking peacefully through a forest
  - Being in the mountains or by a still lake, or sitting by a running river

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Suggestions for Improving Guided Imagery Practice

- Think in terms of the unlimited
- Release all thoughts of what others might think
- Include relaxing music in the background
- Be playful

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Conclusion

- The imagination has a powerful impact on body and mind
  - Relaxation guided imagery is a technique that can calm the body and mind by suppressing the sympathetic nervous system and creating homeostasis

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Meditation

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Key Questions

- If I concentrate really hard on something, am I meditating?
- What is a mantra?
- If I fall asleep during meditation, will I get the same benefits?
- When is the best time to meditate?
- Is it possible to empty my mind of all thoughts?

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Meditation: It's Not What You Think

- Meditation is becoming increasingly popular for use in everyday life
  - Gaining new respect among those who study the brain

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Meditation: What Is It?

- Conscious mental method of systematically allowing the mind to focus gently on a single item
- Common characteristics of all meditation
  - A quiet environment
  - A comfortable, relaxed position
  - A point of mental focus

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What Meditation Is Not

- Meditation is not making the mind become completely still to a point at which no thoughts are happening

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Meditation Put into Practice (1 of 3)

- Mantra meditation
  - A mental device (constant and repetitive focus of attention)
  - A passive attitude
  - Decreased muscle tone facilitated by a comfortable position
  - A quiet environment

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FYI: The Faith Factor

- A word or phrase associated with one's faith or beliefs brings greater results from meditation
  - Faith factor
    - Improves people's success in staying with their practice of meditation and incorporating meditation into their daily routine over time

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Research Highlight: Magical Mantra

- It makes no difference what word or phrase you repeat for your mantra
  - The process of focusing on, and repeating, a sound is the crucial component

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Meditation Put into Practice (2 of 3)

- Ending meditation
  - End meditation by returning slowly to normal consciousness
  - Give yourself two or three full minutes to quietly sit in your chair, enjoying the peacefulness of the experience
- Mantra meditation: putting it all together
  - See instructions in text

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Meditation Put into Practice (3 of 3)

- Breathing meditation
  - Focus on bodily sensations, particularly breathing
- Additional ways to meditate
  - Contemplation
  - Breath counting
  - Thought watching
  - Chakra meditation
  - Walking meditation

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Research Focus: Brainwave Activity

- During meditation, people are able to reach deep levels of brainwave activity associated with sleep and enjoy deep rest in as few as five minutes
  - They remain aware and conscious
  - Heart rates decrease dramatically and breathing rates slow dramatically
  - Called hypometabolic state

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Benefits of Meditation

- Meditation can reduce the harmful effects of tension and stress
  - Independent of the spiritual and philosophical components of meditation
  - fMRI studies parts of the brain known to be involved in attention and in the control of the autonomic nervous system are activated in meditation
    - Provides a neurochemical and anatomical basis for the effects of meditation on various physiological activities

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Physiological Benefits of Meditation (1 of 3)

- Heartbeat and breathing rates slow
- Oxygen consumption falls by 20%
- Blood lactate levels drop
- Increased alpha brain wave patterns

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Physiological Benefits of Meditation (2 of 3)

- Many stress-related conditions are favorably affected
  - Improvement in the breathing patterns of patients with bronchial asthma
  - Lower blood pressure in both pharmacologically treated and untreated hypertensive patients
  - Reduced premature ventricular contractions in patients with ischemic heart disease
  - Fewer symptoms of angina pectoris

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Physiological Benefits of Meditation (3 of 3)

- Lower serum cholesterol levels in hypercholesterolemic patients
- Relief of sleep-onset insomnia
- Amelioration of stuttering
- Lower blood sugar levels in diabetic patients
- Reduction in the symptoms of psychiatric illness including depression

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Psychological Benefits of Meditation (1 of 2)

- Improved job performance and satisfaction
- Improved academic performance in high school and college
- Better long-term and short-term recall
- Sounder sleep

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Psychological Benefits of Meditation (2 of 2)

- Less anxiety
- Less fear
- Fewer phobias
- More positive mental health
- Increased empathy

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Research Highlight: Mellow, Empathic Meditators

- Meditation training associated with persistent increased activity on the left side of the prefrontal cortex, area of the brain associated with joyful and serene emotions
- Certain types of meditation may increase the human capacity for empathy

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Frequently Asked Questions about Meditation (1 of 3)

- How do I stay focused?
  - Be gentle with yourself
  - Return to your mantra after your mind has wandered off
- When is the best time to meditate?
  - Ideally, twice a day, after awakening and in the early afternoon
  - Before eating
  - Not as a tool to aid sleep

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Frequently Asked Questions about Meditation (2 of 3)

- How long should I meditate?
  - Begin with 10 minutes
- Will meditation get easier with practice?
  - Not necessarily, but the physiological and psychological effects of meditation tend to expand with practice
- Does it matter if I lie down, rather than sit, during meditation?
  - Sit in a way that affirms an attitude of presence, openness, calmness, and dignity

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Frequently Asked Questions about Meditation (3 of 3)

- How will I know if I am meditating correctly?
  - The quality of a good meditation may be less about what happens during meditation and more about how you feel afterward

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Conclusion

- Meditation is simple and powerful
  - Although we may not entirely understand why or how it works, we know that it can enhance our health and well-being

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More Stress Reduction Strategies

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Key Questions

- Why do I feel so good after watching a funny movie or TV show?
- What kind of music is best for relaxation?
- I feel better after a good cry. Besides crying, are there other ways to relieve upset feelings?
- I've thought about journaling when I am stressed. What are the benefits?

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More Stress-Reduction Strategies

- Although some stress-reduction methods have not been thoroughly examined scientifically, strong anecdotal evidence supports their effectiveness
  - Best attitude for these approaches is that of discovery

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Laughter and Humor

- Humor and laughter differ
  - A sense of humor is an intellectual process
  - Laughter is a psychophysiological response that spontaneously engages every major system in the body
  - Sarcasm is the "darker side" of humor
    - Can be form of aggression

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The Benefits of Laughter (1 of 2)

- Physiological
  - Exercises and relaxes muscles
  - Improves respiration
  - Stimulates circulation
  - Decreases stress hormones
  - Increases the immune system's defenses
  - Elevates pain threshold and tolerance
  - Enhances mental functioning

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The Benefits of Laughter (2 of 2)

- Psychological
  - Reduces stress, anxiety, and tension and counteracts symptoms of depression
  - Elevates mood, self-esteem, hope, energy, and vigor
  - Enhances memory, creative thinking, and problem solving
  - Improves interpersonal interactions
  - Promotes psychological well-being

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Research Highlight: The Power of Laughter

- Watching lighthearted movies reliably relaxes blood vessels and increases blood flow
- Watching humorous videos can cause a significant reduction in stress hormones, including cortisol

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How Laughter Works (1 of 2)

- Has been called “internal jogging”
- Two phases
  - Arousal phase, with an increase in physiological measures including pulse, respirations, and blood pressure
  - Resolution phase, during which physiological measures return to resting values or lower values, creating a relaxation response

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How Laughter Works (2 of 2)

- Associated with a release of tension and an increase in the natural mood-lifters known as endorphins
- Can empower people by giving them a different perspective on life's problems
- Note the subjective nature of humor
  - Varies widely between genders, ages, and cultures

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Laughter/Humor Strategies for Stress Prevention (1 of 3)

- Keep a "funnies file" with your favorite cartoons and jokes
- Choose a comedy rather than a violent movie
- When the news is depressing, turn it off
- When something makes you laugh out loud, share it with a friend and multiply the mirth

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Laughter/Humor Strategies for Stress Prevention (2 of 3)

- Keep a "humor journal" in which you write things that make you laugh, such as funny things children say, or humorous errors in the newspaper
- Plan a weekly funny movie night with family or friends

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Laughter/Humor Strategies for Stress Prevention (3 of 3)

- Read your favorite newspaper cartoons every day or check out funny videos on YouTube
- Spend time with fun, lighthearted people who find the joy in life

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Music

- Music and mood
  - Music creates the mood for many settings
- History of music
  - Music has been used throughout history to calm the body, mind, and spirit
    - The term music therapy is relatively new

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Effects of Music on the Mind and Body (1 of 3)

- Clinical and anecdotal evidence suggests that music can:
  - Manage pain
  - Improve mood and mobility
  - Reduce the need for pain relievers and sedatives during and after surgery
  - Relieve anxiety and depression
  - Lower blood pressure
  - Enhance concentration and creativity

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Effects of Music on the Mind and Body (2 of 3)

- Other findings
  - Surgical patients exposed to music reported significantly lower pain intensity and required less morphine compared to a control group
  - Subjects with osteoarthritis reported less arthritic pain when music was played, compared to a control group of subjects who simply sat quietly

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Effects of Music on the Mind and Body (3 of 3)

- People undergoing surgery require less anesthesia, wake from anesthesia more quickly and with fewer side effects, and heal more rapidly when healing music is played before, during, and after the surgical procedure
- Individuals suffering from depression need less medication and have more success in psychotherapy when music is added to their course of treatment

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Effects of Music Therapy on the Mind and Body

- Grief, loneliness, and anger are all managed better when appropriate music is added to therapy
- Children with autism and children diagnosed with brain damage all react positively to music therapy

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How Music Works

- Directly, as the effect of sound upon the cells and organs
- Indirectly, by affecting the emotions, which in turn influence numerous bodily processes

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FYI: Healing Music

- Ambience therapy
  - Music mixed with sounds of nature
  - Can reduce pain and anxiety by helping patients to relax

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Medical Resonance Therapy Music

- MRT-music
  - Composed by German musicologist Peter Huebner
  - Based on the principle of resonance
  - Precise harmony contained in a given musical structure resonates inside the human body
  - Alters anxiety levels, pain thresholds

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Research Highlight: Soothing Music Affects Stress Hormones

- Patients who listened to soothing music immediately before anesthesia showed a drop in stress hormones by more than 50%
  - Patients who did not listen to music showed a rise of more than 50%

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Perception of Music

- Subjective emotional response to music activates a physiological response
- Different types of music affect us differently

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Types of Music and Stress Reduction

- Classical
  - Baroque musical period appears most effective
  - Listeners show brainwave activity similar to that commonly found in meditators
- New age music
  - Can create a positive, even healing atmosphere

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What Else Can I Do? (1 of 3)

- Listen to your body
- Deal directly with the cause
- Distance yourself
- Talk yourself through a situation
- Pat yourself on the back
- Be creative
- Change problems to challenges
- Keep agreements

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What Else Can I Do? (2 of 3)

- Change your physiology, change your feelings
- Write about it – mindful writing
- Talk it out
- Cry it out
- Scream it out
- Sing it out
- Dance it out

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What Else Can I Do? (3 of 3)

- Focus on the needs of others
- Have sex
- Soak in the tub
- Gaze at the sky

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"Solutions" to Avoid

- Don't
  - Gossip
  - Whine and complain
  - Blame others
  - Self-inflict pain
  - Over do it
  - Attempt suicide

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Stress Management for LIFE: Planning for the Future

- Take the opportunity to focus on:
  - Synthesizing your learning
  - Reflecting on your growth
  - Planning how to implement what you have learned

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Conclusion

- There are many things you can do to relieve stress
  - The methods you choose are up to you

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