

## HOW TO PROMOTE RELAXATION

PRACTICE	REASON
<p><b>Preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good general health habits</li> <li>• Avoid stimulants</li> <li>• Soothing foods/herbs</li> <li>• Stretch muscles</li> <li>• Massage</li> </ul>	<p>Reduce various noxious internal stimuli</p> <p>Avoid arousal of central nervous system (CNS) and sympathetic nervous system</p> <p>Promote parasympathetic activity. Inhibit sympathetic activity and CNS arousal</p> <p>Reset muscle spindles to reduce later proprioceptive input to CNS</p> <p>Stimulate CNS pleasure centers. Reset muscle spindles to reduce later proprioceptive input</p>
<p><b>Timing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Late night, very early morning or afternoon for sleep</li> <li>• Morning or early evening for wakeful relaxation</li> <li>• After adequate sleep for wakeful relaxation</li> <li>• Allow plenty of time</li> </ul>	<p>Circadian sleep zones</p> <p>Circadian wake zones</p> <p>Reduce homeostatic sleep drive</p> <p>Biochemical reactions of relaxation take time</p>
<p><b>Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet</li> <li>• Safe</li> <li>• Warm, but not too hot</li> <li>• Dark</li> </ul>	<p>Reduce CNS-arousing external stimuli</p> <p>Reduce CNS-arousing thoughts/emotions</p> <p>Stimulate preoptic sleep-promoting centers</p> <p>Reduce arousing stimuli, stimulate preoptic sleep-promoting centers, promote EEG synchronization</p>
<p><b>Posture and Physical Devices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfortable</li> <li>• Passive (complete muscle relaxation)</li> <li>• Warm skin, including fingers and toes</li> <li>• Head low</li> <li>• Practice few postures, hold longer</li> <li>• Pressure on forehead/orbits</li> </ul>	<p>Reduce CNS-arousing internal and external stimuli</p> <p>Reduce proprioceptive input to and neuromuscular output from CNS</p> <p>Stimulate preoptic sleep-promoting centers</p> <p>Stimulate baroreflex inhibition of cardiovascular activity, blood pressure hormones and CNS arousal</p> <p>Biochemical reactions of relaxation take time. Reduce arousing proprioceptive input and cognitive responses to changing position</p> <p>May stimulate vagal heart-slowing reflex</p>
<p><b>Breathing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize exhalation</li> <li>• Reduce respiratory rate, lengthen pauses while maintaining smooth breath and mental calm</li> </ul>	<p>Lengthen cardiac-slowing phase of sinus arrhythmia</p> <p>Raising CO<sub>2</sub> threshold may slow EEG, but can cause anxiety and hyperventilation unless accompanied by proper meditative focus</p>
<p><b>Mental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passive attitude</li> </ul>	<p>Reduce CNS-arousing thoughts/emotions</p>

- Mental device (meditation, mantra, imagery, etc.)

Increase CNS-soothing and reduce CNS-arousing thoughts/emotions

- Learn/repeat successful relaxation experiences

Create conditioned relaxation responses, build self-efficacy

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