



Relaxation

The Seven-Eleven Technique

Relaxed breathing and your body: To relax the whole body you must first breathe correctly.

Fast breathing

- Happens when we're excited or anxious
- increases oxygen in blood & speeds up heart
- means the body is ready for action

Slow breathing

- Happens when we're safe and feel calm
- slows your heart rate
- means the body is calm and relaxed

We can't directly control our heart rate or adrenaline levels, but we can control our breathing to let our brain know that it's time to relax.

The Seven-Eleven Technique

Step 1: Settle yourself comfortably somewhere where you won't be disturbed. Wear loose clothing and sit or lie comfortably with your legs uncrossed and your arms by your side. Close your eyes.

Step 2: Concentrate on becoming aware of your feet on the floor, of your legs and arms, and your head against the cushion, pillow or chair.

Step 3: Concentrate on your breathing. Begin to make **each out-breath longer than your in-breath**. A good way to do this is to breathe in to the count of 7, then breathe out gently and more slowly to the count of 11.



This works because the out-breath stimulates the body's natural relaxation response. By changing your pattern of breathing in this way your body automatically begins to relax.

Step 4: Repeat this about 10 or 20 times, knowing that you will relax more each time.

Step 5: Concentrate on the counting (don't let your mind wander off) and feel the welcome sense of calm gradually flow in. Try and be aware of how much less tense you feel, just by relaxing your breathing and blocking out your worrying thoughts.

For instant relaxation: do the exercise a few times, wherever you are, if you feel so wound up that you can't make a simple decision, or are nervous. If you find it easier, breathe in to the count of 3, then breathe out gently and more slowly to the count of 5. The important thing is that your out-breaths last longer than your in-breaths.



Keeping practising

To make the best use of relaxation you need to:

- Practise daily.
- Start to use relaxation in everyday situations.
- Use relaxation to help in difficult situations, e.g. breathing slowly.
- Develop a more relaxed lifestyle.

Remember, relaxation is a skill like any other and takes time to learn. Keep a note of how anxious you feel before and after relaxation, rating your anxiety 1- 10.

Media Centre

This exercise is also available to watch and follow online in our media library www.youthspace.me/videos

You can also see our guides to:

- The Seven-Eleven relaxation technique
- Relaxed breathing techniques



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