

# Department of Speech and Language Therapy

## Relaxation

Two methods of relaxation are explained below, the use of imagery, and 'tense and release' exercises.

For both you need to find a quiet, warm place which is free from distractions. You must set aside enough time to complete the relaxation exercises, without having to rush them.

### Relaxation through imagery

Find a comfortable place, either sit or lie down. Try and clear your mind of any distractions. Think of a place you would like to be, imagine somewhere tranquil such as a warm beach, in a field of flowers or on a gently rocking boat on a blue sea. Use the image to create a feeling of peace. Imagine the feeling of the sun on your limbs and face.

Now work through the body from the feet upwards, ensuring that each part of the body is relaxed. If you feel any tension or strain in a group of muscles, tighten them and then release. Work up slowly through the feet, legs, buttocks, stomach, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck and head to your facial muscles. Your body should begin to feel heavy but loose as you relax.

### Tense and release

Try and ensure that all of your body is supported, use a bed, couch or reclining chair for these exercises. When you tense a specific area (or muscle group) make sure that only your target area is tensing. Do not re-tense a muscle group after it has become relaxed. With all of these exercises perform the movements in a slow, smooth and controlled way. If you suffer from any joint or muscle problems be careful and stop if you feel any pain. Hold the tension for up to seven seconds if you can.

Begin by curling up your toes tightly. Hold for up to seven seconds if you can, then release. It may help to wiggle your toes slightly to shake out any last feelings of tension that are in your toes.

Move upwards through your body, tightening and relaxing each group of muscles (feet, calf muscles, thighs, buttocks, stomach, chest, arms, hands and fingers) then shrug your shoulders up to your ears, hold and then let them slowly drop back down. Pull your shoulders down, hold the tension for a few seconds and then release again.

Slowly drop your head onto your chest, hold and then slowly lift back up again. Slowly tilt your head backwards, hold and then lift again. Make sure each movement is smooth and controlled. Next very slowly rotate your head from side to side, looking over one shoulder and then the other.

Open your mouth and keep it open while you tilt your head backwards as far as is comfortable. Then keeping your head still, try to close your mouth to create a stretch through the front of your neck. Release, and lower your head to its normal position again.

Finally, screw up your face, tightening your eyes, lips, nose etc. Hold for up to seven seconds and then release.

Your whole body should now feel relaxed.



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### Help with this leaflet:



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### Document history

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Contact number	01223 245151
Publish/Review date	November 2011/ November 2014
File name	Relaxation
Version number/Ref	3/PIN1733