



A psychological therapy service

Stress Control Workshop

Session 2
Controlling your body



stresscontrol

Face your fears; be more active; watch what you drink

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Contents Page

Session 2: Controlling your body

Session 2 Summary



Tick Once Complete

Breathing retraining



Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)



- Part 1: Learn deep relaxation



- Part 2: Learn quick relaxation



Exercise

Effects of caffeine



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Breathing retraining

This is a quick method to use to calm your body. It can also be used to help prevent panic.

Sit in a comfy chair and relax as much as you can. Take a slow normal breath (not a deep breath) and think “1” to yourself. As you breathe out, think “relax”; breathe in again and think “2”, breathe out and think “relax”. Keep doing this up to 10. When you reach 10, reverse and start back down to 1. Try to put all else out of your mind. It may help to visualise the numbers and the word “relax” in your mind’s eye.

Don’t be put off if you can’t do this straight away. You can boost the benefits of this by breathing from the diaphragm:

Diaphragmatic breathing

Place one hand on your chest and the other over your belly button. As you breathe in, the hand on your stomach should be pushed out while the hand on your chest should not move. As you breathe out, your stomach should pull in. Your chest should not move.

To help, breathe in through your nose, purse your lips and breathe out slowly through your mouth. If you are a chest breather, you may find this difficult at first. If you can’t get the hang of this, lie on your back on the floor and practise as it is easier to do in this position.

Put these two exercises together and do them twice a day. Once you get good at them, practise when you are at work, sitting on the bus, watching TV etc. The aim is to be able to do this no matter where you are. No one will notice you doing them.

THIS APPROACH IS SUMMARISED ON THE NEXT PAGE.

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Breathing retraining

Take a breath in and think “1”.

Breathe out and think “relax”.

Take a breath in and think “2”.

Breathe out and think “relax”.

Repeat up to “10” and then back down to “1”.

Concentrate only on breathing and on the number and “relax” in the mind’s eye.

Use slow normal breathing (10-12 breaths per minute). Breathe in through nose. Purse your lips and breathe out slowly through mouth.

Use the diaphragm - as you breathe in, your stomach should push out while your chest should not move.

As you breathe out, your stomach should pull in. Your chest should not move when you breathe out.

Practise twice a day in different places.

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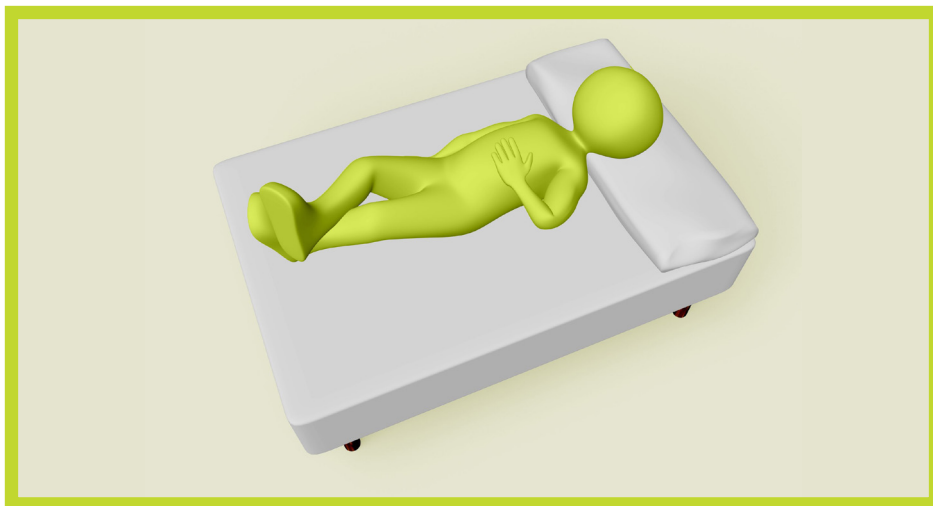
4

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Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)



Stress fills you with energy which makes your muscles more tense. PMR teaches you to fight this by:

1. Teaching you how to relax the muscles
2. Teaching you how to control your breathing.

These two skills will teach you how to control your body. The easiest way to learn it is by using a CD, which you should receive in today's session. It is yours to keep.

PMR divides into three parts:

Part 1) Deep Relaxation

Part 2) Quick Relaxation

Part 3) Prevention

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5

PART 1: Learning Deep Relaxation

Deep relaxation is the form most favoured by experts in stress control. You will need a CD player. If you want to download the relaxation straight to a CD or mp3 player / iPod, you will find it in the download section of www.glasgowsteps.com

One word of warning: if you have any problems such as a back injury and are concerned that PMR might make it worse, ask your GP for advice.

What is it?

PMR teaches you how to relax your body and mind. You first become aware of the way stress affects your body ('I didn't realise that my shoulders were up at my ears all day'). Once you become aware of this, you then use the CD to get rid of it. Once you get good at it, you will feel stress creep into your body at a much earlier stage. So you will be able to nip it in the bud.

Like all skills, PMR takes time to pick up. You should expect that it will take a few weeks to even start to feel relaxed when you play the CD. Bear in mind you are learning something you have lost the knack of or even haven't had in the first place. So be patient.

Where should you play the CD?

Play it in a room where you can get some peace and quiet and where you can be warm and comfy. Try different rooms to see which is best for you.

DON'T play the CD while driving your car for obvious reasons.

Should you sit or lie down?

Suit yourself. The best places may be the bed or the settee. You may prefer the floor. If you have a comfy chair (recliners are very good), you could use this.

When should you play your relaxation?

Every day. Many people under stress find it hard to find time for PMR. You must work at this. Decide what time of day suits you best and then stick to this time.

What will happen when you play it?

You will hear Jim White's voice. You will tense and relax various muscles. The idea is that you become aware of the difference between tension and relaxation in your muscles.

Jim will then lead you to slow your breathing to a steady pace.

Toward the end of the CD, you will move onto ways to relax your mind. After Jim stops talking, you could just stay where you are to enjoy the relaxed feeling. You count back from 4 to 1 to end.

Please note that this is not a hypnotic CD so don't worry about going into a trance. You will be in complete control.

10 tips to help you relax

- 1** Get as comfy as you can before you start. Take off your shoes and wear loose clothes. Make sure the room is warm. If you can, switch your phone off. Make sure no one else comes in while you play the CD - if they want to join in from the start that's fine.
- 2** At first, you should play the CD when you are feeling fairly calm: you will be able to concentrate better and this will help you to pick up the skill more quickly.
- 3** When you go to play the CD, you may think of all the other things you should be doing instead. This is a common problem in stress - do not become distracted. You must set aside time to relax.
- 4** As with learning any skill, 'practice makes perfect' so play the CD each day, preferably at the same time.
- 5** Don't worry about how well you are doing. Most people find their concentration wanders in the first few weeks. This is normal and as you get used to the CD it will improve. Let relaxation come naturally: don't try to rush it. When the feeling comes, enjoy it.

- 6 Use your Breathing Retraining skills to boost the relaxation. Practise slowing down your breathing to about 10-12 breaths per minute at various times of the day (use the second hand on your watch). This will help you keep your body calm across the day.
- 7 PMR can leave you feeling nicely drowsy. Some people fall asleep - if you do, don't worry but bear in mind that you are learning a skill, so you will get more out of it if you stay awake. If you need to be alert after using the CD (e.g. driving) make sure that you feel fully on the ball before setting off.
- 8 You may find that when you tense your muscles, you hold your breath. Don't worry; most people do this at the start. Try to keep the muscle tensing and breathing control separate.
- 9 Keep a diary. This helps you see if you are making progress. Fill in the diary at the end of this handout after you play the CD each time.
- 10 Keep playing the **Deep** track (1) until you can relax well. At this point, you could switch to the **CD** track (2).

PART 2: Learning Quick Relaxation

This lets you fine-tune your new skills. The idea is the same as before except that now you can learn to relax more quickly. It is simply a quick version of what you have just learned. Same rules apply - play the **Quick** track at the same time each day. As before, don't expect to pick it up at once and don't be put off when it doesn't work first time.

If you want to play both tracks each day then go ahead - you can't get enough relaxation! However the whole aim of PMR is to teach you a way to control your stress yourself so you should aim to phase out your CD. So your final job is **prevention**:

PART 3: Prevention

Think of a soldier entering enemy territory. He expects to be attacked at any moment. He carries a weapon so that he can fight back. As he is well trained, he knows what to look out for. If it comes to it, he knows how to win the fight. The soldier is you; the enemy is stress; the weapon is the skill of relaxation; enemy territory is anywhere you feel under stress.

With the aid of your new skill, you can go into these places armed with a weapon that you did not have before. You now have a way of staying in control. As you will be more alert to stress building up, you can nip it in the bud before it gets the chance to get a grip of you.

You do not have to run through all the parts of the CD. Stick to the bits you find best for you. This could be breathing control, relaxing your shoulders, etc. If you are with others, do the exercises: no one will notice.

In summary, you should:

- Start with Deep Relaxation / keep a diary.
- Play the CD every day until you learn to relax.
- Move to Quick Relaxation.
- Play the CD every day until you can relax quickly.
- Move to doing it on your own

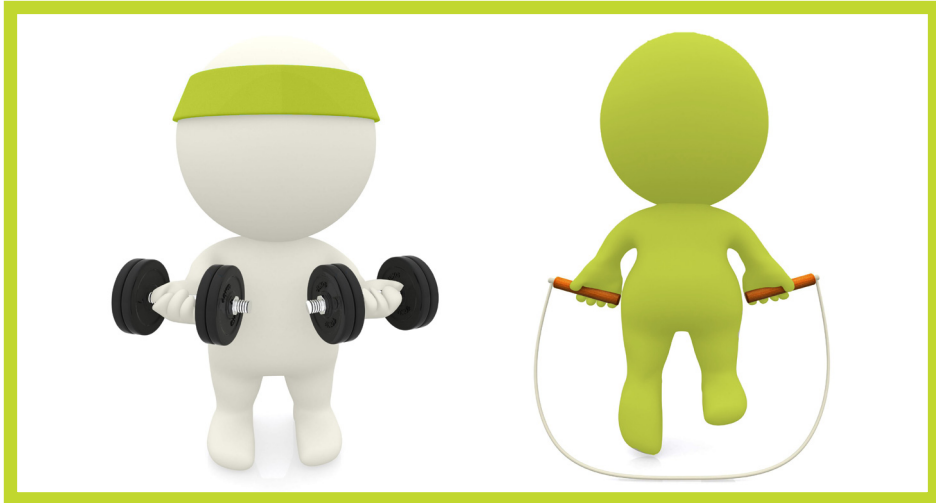
The aim here is to nip stress in the bud by relaxing at the very first sign of stress building up in your body



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Exercise



We know that exercise is good for your health. It can:

1. Help control weight
2. Help reduce blood pressure
3. Help keep your bones, muscles and joints healthy
4. Improve your body shape
5. Cut down the chances of dying young
6. Reduce the risk of heart disease
7. Reduce the risk of diabetes
8. Reduce the risk of colon cancer
9. Possibly stave off Alzheimers

So exercise makes sense if you want to stay fit, but we now know that exercise can also help fight stress. For this reason, it is now a part of 'Stress Control'.

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10

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You may have found that you feel better after exercise: this is good but it won't last long. To get long-lasting benefit, you need to do regular exercise.

Do I have to get on the lycra gear?

No. You can do this in your house, outside or in a gym. Exercise could be:

1. Going to a gym
2. Brisk walk
3. Jogging or running
4. Swimming
5. Golf
6. Football
7. Badminton
8. Aerobic DVD or class

Make sure you choose something you like. You could do a range of things to give you a bit of variety. Bear in mind that if you do go to the gym, it is getting you out of the house. It also lets you meet others. This can help in itself.

How does exercise help stress?

We know that it does help but we are not sure how it works. There are a few theories but we need to do a lot more research to find out more.

How much time do I need to spend?

You should try to do at least 30 minutes most days of the week.

Does this have to be all at one time?

No. You could break it up. You could spread it across the day by doing 15 minutes in the morning and 15 at night.

How hard must the exercise be?

The World Health Organisation's guidelines say you should aim for moderate exercise.

What does that mean?

It involves two things – you should be aware of your heart rate rising but you should not be so out of puff that you could not talk easily. A **brisk walk** is moderate and, so, as good as any other form of exercise.

Do I need to be fit to start getting active?

No. But you should check with your GP if you are unsure about this. It is best to build up slowly. So you might think of starting with daily short walks.

Do you have to be young to start?

All of us can be helped by this. If your GP has no concerns and if you start at the right level, then age is of no concern.

Final words

Getting started is the hardest bit. Once you get into your stride, you will find yourself looking forward to both your PMR and exercise.

Fill out the final form on the back page to get you started.

Effects of caffeine

Caffeine is a **stimulant** that affects the central nervous system (CNS). Low levels of caffeine can help you think more clearly, keep you alert and help you work for longer.

Caffeine can be found in coffee (especially fresh), tea, fizzy drinks like Coke, Pepsi or Irn-Bru, pain killers such as aspirin, cold remedies and headache tablets. Energy tablets like Pro-plus have very high levels as do energy drinks such as Red Bull. Chocolate has caffeine, though at quite a low level. Many other products contain caffeine so check the packet if you are concerned.



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12

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The effects of too much caffeine can be very similar to those of stress. As a very rough guide, about 6 cups of fresh coffee or 10 cups of instant coffee or 12 cups of tea a day could be enough to make you feel worse. As we all have our own limit at which we can be affected, you should check from the list below if you think caffeine might make your stress worse:

Effects of too much caffeine: feeling nervous, irritable, agitated, shaky, headaches, muscle twitch, flushed face, upset stomach, increased heart rate, speeded up breathing, poor sleep (especially if you take caffeine at night).

Your body can get so used to caffeine that, if you just cut it out completely, you can get:

Withdrawal effects: throbbing headache, tiredness or drowsiness, anxiety, depression and feeling sick.
These feelings could last up to one week

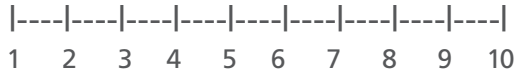
If you think caffeine may have a negative effect on you, you should:

1. Wean yourself off it slowly. This will stop withdrawal effects.
2. Switch to **decaffeinated** tea and coffee.
3. Switch from fizzy drinks to caffeine-free drinks or pure fruit juice.
4. Take as few pain killers, etc. as you can (check this with your GP if concerned).
5. Stay clear of all energy drinks or tablets.



Stress Control: Relaxation diary

Before you play your CD, rate how stressful you feel using the 1-10 scale below. A score of 10 would mean your stress could not be worse. A score of 1 would mean you were not under any stress. Your score will probably be somewhere in



	Time and place	Stress level before playing CD	Stress level after playing CD
Example	7pm, in the back bedroom	7	5
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

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between. When the CD ends, rate your stress again using the same scale. You should also make some notes about how you got on listening to the CD. Look at the example below.

Comments
Lost my concentration for a bit but got it back before the end. Getting the breathing sorted out now and I felt a bit better by the time the CD ended. I'll try relaxing like this at work tomorrow.

How could exercise help me?

1)

2)

3)

What are the main things stopping me?

1)

2)

3)

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16

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