

# Relax

Learning to relax is a skill that requires practice.

Most relaxation exercises involve relaxing all the muscles in the body to reduce the physical symptoms of stress such as muscle tension. Relaxing will lower your heart rate, blood pressure and slow your breathing.

If your body is relaxed this helps to make you feel calmer emotionally.

Another method to help you to relax is to turn your mind away from stressful thoughts and situations, and instead think about something pleasant - like "day-dreaming".

The following technique uses both muscle relaxation and day-dreaming to help you to feel calm.

## **DO THIS WHEN YOU ARE FEELING TENSE, STRESSED, ANXIOUS OR HAVING TROUBLE GETTING TO SLEEP**

Sit comfortably in a chair with your neck supported or lie on your bed

Close your eyes

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth SLOWLY and DEEPLY, concentrate on how this feels

Curl your toes really tight inside your shoes, hold them in this position release your toes and think how light they feel

Breathe slowly and deeply

Tighten the muscles in your thighs and bottom, hold this position whilst continuing to breathe, let out your breathe as you release the tension in your muscles. Feel yourself sink deeper into the chair

Pull in your stomach muscles, hold the tensions for a few seconds and as you breathe out let the muscles relax

Make a fist with your hands, feel the tension up your arms and pull your shoulders up towards your ears, hold the position, relax and breathe out. Feel the tension float out down your shoulders and out of your hands

Push your head into the head rest, push your tongue down in your mouth and try to tighten your jaw, hold it, breathe, then relax

Keep your eyes closed and breathing slow and deep

Imagine you are somewhere safe and warm

You are alone and no-one can come near you

You may be on a beach with the sound of the waves on the shore and the sun warm on your body

Or you may be in a field with the sound of the wind in the trees

Stay in this safe, warm place with your breathing relaxed for as long as you want