

Harmonization exercises III

Relaxation techniques

Relaxation techniques

- **Relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms and help you enjoy a better quality of life, especially if you have an illness.**
- Relaxation techniques are a great way to help with stress.

- Relaxation is a process that decreases the effects of stress on your mind and body.
- Relaxation techniques can help you cope with everyday stress and with stress related to various health problems (pain, serious illness).

Practicing relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms by:

- Slowing your heart rate
- Lowering blood pressure
- Slowing your breathing rate
- Increasing blood flow to major muscles
- Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain
- Improving concentration
- Reducing anger and frustration
- Boosting confidence to handle problems

Types of relaxation techniques:

- **Autogenic relaxation**
- **Progressive muscle relaxation**
- **Visualization.**

Autogenic relaxation

- Autogenic means something that comes from within you.
- In this relaxation technique, you use both visual imagery and body awareness to reduce stress.
- You repeat words or suggestions in your mind to relax and reduce muscle tension.
- For example, you may imagine a peaceful setting and then focus on controlled, relaxing breathing, slowing your heart rate, or feeling different physical sensations, such as relaxing each arm or leg one by one.

Progressive muscle relaxation

- In this relaxation technique, you focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group.
- This helps you focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation.
- One method of progressive muscle relaxation is to start by tensing and relaxing the feet muscles and progressively working your way up to your neck and head.
- You can also start with your head and neck and work down to your feet.
- Tense your muscles for at least five seconds and then relax for 30 seconds, and repeat.

Visualization

- In this relaxation technique, you form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation.
- During visualization, try to use as many senses as you can, including smell, sight, sound and touch.
- If you imagine relaxing at the ocean, for instance, think about such things as the smell of salt water, the sound of crashing waves and the warmth of the sun on your body.
- You may want to close your eyes, sit in a quiet spot and loosen any tight clothing.

Other common relaxation techniques include:

- Hypnosis
- Massage
- Meditation
- Tai chi
- Yoga

- Remember: that relaxation techniques are skills. And as with any skill, your ability to relax improves with practice.
- Be patient with yourself — don't let your effort to practice relaxation techniques become yet another stressor.
- If one relaxation technique doesn't work for you, try another.