

# RETRACKING



*This download is about finding other ways to cope with stress, rather than harming yourself. You should look at the other files too, and save this to disk, or print it out.*

**1**

*If you self harm repeatedly, we would strongly recommend you get help from friends, family and professionals. These sheets may be a first step to getting help, but that is all.*

**2**

*If you are thinking about self harm, look at the depression section as well as this, and perhaps drugs and alcohol if you are using these to try and cope with your problems.*

**3**

*The first four pages are about relaxation. Learning to relax takes time. This handout gives one way of relaxing, there are many more...*

**4**

*The last few pages are about stopping and thinking about self-harm, will it get you what you want? Will it make you, or other people feel better?*

**5**

*That's all, but talk to someone, or use a phone help line if self-harm urges are very strong.*



# LET'S RELAX!



Learning to relax is an extremely important and valuable thing to do. It doesn't come naturally to many of us and we need to practice the skills involved in order to become better at it.

Learning to relax stops us from:

- ✓ GETTING PHYSICALLY TENSE
- ✓ HAVING HEADACHES
- ✓ GETTING TIRED
- ✓ BECOMING ANXIOUS AND IRRITABLE
- ✓ HAVING SLEEPLESS NIGHTS
- ✓ GETTING INTO ARGUMENTS AND FIGHTS



## RULES FOR RELAXATION



DECIDE UPON A DAILY ROUTINE FOR YOUR RELAXATION PRACTICE,  
ie, WHEN AND WHERE

CHOOSE SOMEWHERE QUIET TO PRACTICE WHERE YOU WON'T  
BE DISTURBED

DON'T PRACTICE IF YOU ARE HUNGRY OR IF YOU HAVE JUST  
HAD A MEAL

BREATHE THROUGH YOUR NOSE, TAKING DEEP REGULAR BREATHS

TRY TO BE CONSCIOUS OF USING YOUR STOMACH MUSCLES TO  
BREATHE WITH

Turn now to the following pages for specific instructions...  
no falling asleep please !!





# LET'S RELAX THOSE MUSCLES !!



1. LIE DOWN OR SIT SO THAT YOU ARE FEELING REALLY COMFORTABLE.
2. CONCENTRATE ON THE FEELINGS IN YOUR MUSCLES AS WE TRY TENSING OR RELAXING THEM.
3. STARTING WITH YOUR **HANDS AND ARMS**, CLENCH YOUR FIST TIGHTLY AND TENSE THE MUSCLES IN YOUR ARMS. VERY SLOWLY RELAX THEM. REPEAT SEVERAL TIMES.
4. NOW THINK ABOUT YOUR **SHOULDERS**. HUNCH THEM UP TIGHTLY, NEARLY TOUCHING YOUR EARS. SLOWLY LET THEM RELAX. REPEAT A NUMBER OF TIMES.
5. KEEPING YOUR **EYES** CLOSED SCREW THEM UP TIGHTLY THEN GRADUALLY RELEASE YOUR EYELIDS UNTIL THEY ARE TOTALLY RELAXED. REPEAT.
6. TIGHTEN UP YOUR **EYEBROWS** BY DRAWING THEM TOGETHER THEN SLOWLY RELEASE THE TENSION IN YOUR FOREHEAD. REPEAT.
7. TENSE YOUR **JAW** BY BITING YOUR BACK TEETH TOGETHER TIGHTLY. THEN LET YOUR JAW GET HEAVIER AND HEAVIER UNTIL TOTALLY RELAXED. REPEAT.
8. TO RELAX YOUR **NECK** LET YOUR CHIN FALL FORWARD ONTO YOUR CHEST UNTIL THE MUSCLES IN YOUR NECK FEEL QUITE TIGHT. SLOWLY PULL IT BACK UNTIL YOU FEEL RELAXED. REPEAT.
9. PULL YOUR **STOMACH** IN AS TIGHTLY AS YOU CAN THEN GRADUALLY RELAX THOSE MUSCLES AND REPEAT.
10. USING YOUR HEELS PUSH DOWN HARD AGAINST THE FLOOR UNTIL YOU FEEL THE **TOPS OF YOUR LEGS** ARE AS TIGHT AS POSSIBLE. SLOWLY RELAX AND THEN REPEAT. FOR THE **BOTTOM HALF OF YOUR LEGS** POINT YOUR TOES AS HARD AS YOU CAN THEN SLOWLY RELEASE AND REPEAT.

GO THROUGH THE WHOLE SEQUENCE AGAIN.

# LEARNING TO BREATHE ...

Sounds a bit daft doesn't it?! We all know how to breathe, it's the first thing that we ever do and we never even have to think about it... could be serious if we were to stop!

Actually there are different ways to breathe and sometimes we have to consciously get our breathing under control. Think about times in the past when:

- ★ you've been frightened
- ★ somebody has been sleeping
- ★ you've been running
- ★ you've felt angry
- ★ you've been upset

There are noticeable variations in our breathing patterns at such times.

It is possible to get our breathing under control to decrease tension, to relax our muscles, to decrease our heart and pulse rate or even to increase our alertness by providing more oxygen to our brain. Try the following:

*Sit quietly but comfortably on a chair with your hands resting in your lap.*

*Keep your back straight but relaxed so that your lungs are able to operate efficiently.*

*Keep your head straight but relaxed with your eyes gently closed.*

*Take a deep, silent breath, through your nose. Feel the breath travelling deeply into your lungs... feel your chest expanding slowly.*

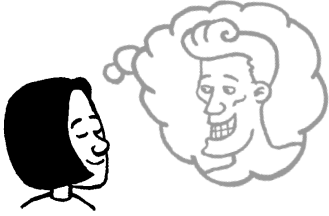
*Let the breath out through your mouth, slowly and calmly feeling your lungs empty.*

*Take another deep breath and feel what is happening to your chest as the air flows through your nose, down your windpipe and inflates your lungs.*

*Now breathe out again through your mouth, slowly and quietly.*

*Keep repeating the process at your own pace enjoying the feelings of peace and relaxation.*





# USING OUR IMAGINATIONS

As we have already said, one of the ways to help us relax when we're feeling tense and angry is to use our imagination to picture a pleasant, peaceful scene.

Here is an example of one to help get you started. It is much better however to draw your own imaginary scene, based perhaps on happy memories from your past... be creative, it's your own private world.

Begin by getting yourself relaxed, using the relaxation and breathing exercises that we have already tried. Let all other feelings go... breathe slowly and calmly... close your eyes...

Listen as this is read to you .....

*We are going on a short but gentle journey. We are going into the woods... walking along a winding path through the softly waving trees. It is a beautiful, sunny, warm day with a few cotton wool clouds floating gently across a blue sky. The sun is warm on the skin of your arms and you can feel the breeze softly ruffling your hair. By the side of the path colourful, scented flowers grow in small groups. A young rabbit basks in the sunlight, cleaning his soft fur and nibbling on the lush green grass. You can feel the earth warm and firm under your feet.*

*The path ends at the banks of slowly babbling stream. You sit on a mossy tree trunk at the side of the stream, dipping your feet into the tumbling water which bubbles and sings around your ankles. The water is soft and cool upon your feet as the sun continues to warm your face and arms. The breeze blows a leaf from a nearby tree and you watch as it floats silently down coming to rest upon the surface of the water which carries it away downstream. You close your eyes and listen to the sounds of the water, the birds singing cheerfully in the trees and the leaves rustling gently in the late afternoon air. You can stay here for as long as you like, feet dipped in the stream... there are no pressures to leave... you are calm and happy... no worries... all is well...*



# STOPPING AND THINKING



Do you remember, in the previous sections, we spent some time looking at some of the reasons that might have led you getting into trouble, at school, at home or in the community?

We talked about “*pushes and pulls*”, about “*body language*” and “*keeping in control*”. In this section we have thought about “*willpower*” and might even have tried some exercises aimed at developing greater *self control*.

If you were to take a moment, thinking again about some of the situations which have led to uncomfortable consequences for yourself, you would probably agree that if you had given yourself time to think about the possible outcomes you might not have gone ahead?



STOP!



THINK!

WHAT WILL I GAIN FROM DOING THIS?

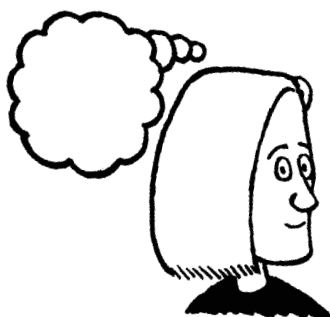
WHAT WILL I LOSE FROM DOING THIS?

WHAT WILL OTHERS GAIN IF I DO THIS?

WHAT WILL OTHERS LOSE IF I DO THIS?

This extra link in the chain of events need only take a matter of seconds, yet it might save you an awful lot of trouble in coming hours and days!

Have a go at filling in a simple diary (overleaf) for the coming week, aiming to keep aware of your responses and possible consequences.



# STOP AND THINK DIARY

DAY AND DATE

TIME & PLACE

WHO WAS THERE

WHAT WAS HAPPENING

WHAT I DID

WHO GAINED WHAT?

WHO LOST WHAT?

DID I STOP AND THINK? YES/NO

WHAT MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED IF I DIDN'T STOP AND THINK? (OR, IF I DID?)