

## Relaxation

It can be difficult to relax, if you have experienced many challenges in life or are currently in a demanding life situation. In such cases, the body is often in a mode of constant tension and vigilance. Even if we are aware that we are *physically* safe, there might still be lacking the *feeling* of a sense of safety. At such times, the idea of relaxing can also feel frightening. We might prefer to continue being watchful and vigilant so that nothing can surprise us. Many people are afraid that if they relax, anxious and unpleasant memories will come to mind. However, constant tension and a state of alertness in the body may be the cause of many ailments such as muscle pain, headaches and problematic sleeping patterns.

Relaxation is a skill that can be learned and is helpful. Practising how to relax is beneficial. It can boost mind and body well-being and the ability to concentrate and study. It can help relieve pain, with sleeping problems and can make us feel calmer. Although relaxation is not a miracle cure and is not a remedy for all problems, it can nevertheless quickly have a positive effect on our well-being. Relaxation requires practice, like all other new skills.

### THE PRACTICE OF RELAXATION

Relaxation can be practiced using relaxation exercises. There are different relaxation exercises that are designed to relax both our body and our mind.

Relaxation exercises can focus for example, on our breathing, on creating visual images or on relaxing different parts of the body.

You can listen to a variety of relaxation exercises on YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/@TurunKriisikeskus1](https://www.youtube.com/@TurunKriisikeskus1)

When practising these exercises it is important to remember the following:

- During the exercise, there is no need to force yourself to relax more than is at that moment possible.
- If the exercises seem difficult to begin with, try not to get frustrated. If you do them regularly, they will start to get easier and become more effective.
- Some relaxation exercises suit certain people better than others, it is therefore useful to try out different types.
- Relaxation can also arouse different kinds of visual images, memories and thoughts. This is not dangerous and such experiences do not need to be avoided. These thoughts, memories and images will come and go. If

you feel like it, you might want to make a drawing or painting of them, or write or talk about them to a friend or professional.

It is important that you learn to become aware of when your body is tense and when it is relaxed. There is no need to evaluate your body's sensations, rather it suffices that you are simply aware of them. When you begin to notice that tension or alertness in your body has no function in the present moment, you can gradually learn to let go of it.

There are other ways to relax apart from doing relaxation or breathing exercises. Walking, getting out into the nature, doing housework, listening to music, spending time with friends, stretching your body, having a massage, heat and cold therapy and going to the sauna can all help you to relax. Experiment with different methods and find a way of relaxing that suits you.

## BREATHING

Breathing plays a very important role in relaxation and in psychological wellbeing in general. Breathing properly can affect our body reactions and thereby have a soothing effect. When we exhale, our heart rate becomes calmer and our blood pressure drops, when we inhale, our heart rate accelerates and our blood pressure rises. If we consciously extend the length of our out breath, we can soothe our body.