

Mindfulness, Meditation & Relaxation Lynne Morrison



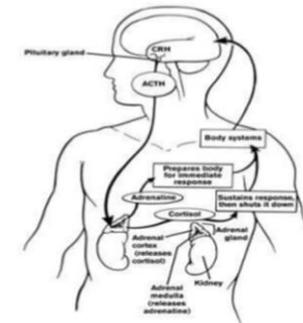
- Stress & Relaxation
- Body Scan
- Mindfulness & Meditation
- Mindfulness of Breath Meditation
- Exercise
- Mindfulness in Everyday Life

What is Stress?

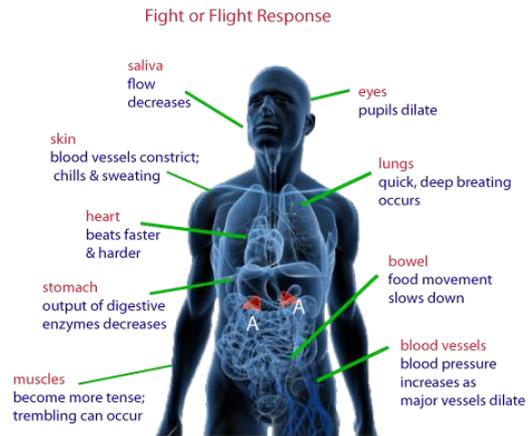
- Stress is a natural human response to pressure - when faced with challenging and sometimes dangerous situations.

What Happens When We Become Stressed?

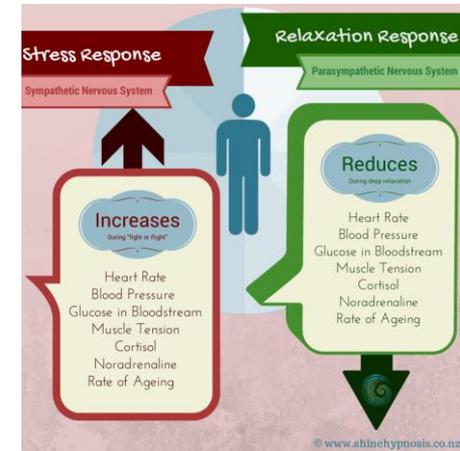
The Hypothalamus
Pituitary Axis (HPA) is
initiated



The Stress Response



The Relaxation Response



How Can we Decrease the Effects of Stress?

- Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Listening to Relaxing Music
- Body Scan
- Hobbies
- Nature
- Mindfulness Meditation

Body Scan



What is Mindfulness?

Paying attention in a particular way:
on purpose, in the present moment
and non-judgementally.

(Jon Kabat-Zinn)

Benefits of Mindfulness

- To be fully present, here and now
- To become less judgemental of self and others
- To learn the distinction between you and your thoughts
- To learn that thoughts and feelings come and go.
- To experience more calm and peacefulness
- To develop resources for facing fear, sadness, anger and grief
- To improve mental clarity, concentration, relaxation and sleep
- To balance blood pressure and the immune system
- To improve energy levels and reduce fatigue

Mindfulness Meditation is Training the Brain

- Bringing your attention into the present moment using our senses
- It is NOT about stopping, changing or eliminating our thoughts
- It is training our self not to get caught up in our thoughts
- Thoughts become less disturbing & distracting

Mindfulness of Breath Meditation Exercise



Mindfulness Meditation Basics

- Relaxation
- Space
- Attitude
- Posture
- Patience
- Perseverance

Everyday Mindfulness

- Bring mindfulness into ordinary daily activities – doing the dishes, walking
- Being in the moment with children – young children are naturally mindful when playing
- Taking 5 deep conscious breathes
- Hobbies
- Being in nature



Resources



- Handouts from this Webinar
- Look for 'Mindfulness' & 'Mindfulness Meditation'
- Free Apps for your phone
 - Smiling Mind
- MS Library
 - Guided Mindfulness-Based Stillness Meditation -The Meditation Sanctuary
- Local Mindfulness Meditation groups
- Books about Mindfulness
 - Jon Kabat-Zinn
 - Meditation, An In-Depth Guide – I.Gawler and P. Bedson

Balancing Stress

Stress Busters

Have a look at this list of quick and easy stress reducers and think about those that might be of value to you in everyday life. Place a “conscious spot” next to those to remind you of these potentially new habits.

- Have a quiet, pleasant sounding alarm to wake up to.
- If the morning rush is stressful: get up 15 minutes earlier, ask someone else to take on a morning task, do some preparation the night before (e.g. iron your clothes, make the lunches), and make sure that all your morning tasks are absolutely necessary.
- Take a deep breath and relax every time you look at your watch.
- Try to slow down when you eat, talk, drive or move.
- Eat regular, balanced meals. Keep prepared foods in the house for times when you don't feel like cooking or shopping.
- Sit quietly for a minute or two before starting your meal. Notice where you are, what you are eating and whom you are with.
- Reduce reliance on cigarettes, caffeine and alcohol. Ask your doctor for help if necessary.
- Drive 5-10 kilometres an hour slower. And try a new route from time to time. If long trips cause you stress, listen to audiotapes/CDs or pleasant music.
- Get extra sleep before family gatherings or important events.
- Keep a daily diary to reduce the stress of trying to recall a day's activities. Carry a notebook to write yourself – and others – notes for the day, the week and the month.
- Don't arrange to do too many things close together or at the same time. Do one thing at a time. Don't think about the next task before you have finished the one you are working on. Let yourself feel a sense of accomplishment before moving on.
- Offload the non-essentials.
- Relax a few standards. Ask yourself if you want to do a particular task, if it needs to be done perfectly, or not at all.

- Make a $\frac{3}{4}$ rule: fill the petrol tank when it is $\frac{3}{4}$ empty, order more medication when it is $\frac{3}{4}$ gone, replace juice or milk when the bottle is $\frac{3}{4}$ empty.
- Do the unpleasant things early in the day so you don't have to worry about them.
- Give time to yourself to do the things you enjoy and schedule them in. Do them just for fun without the need to compete or be the best.
- Plan situations that could cause you stress. Take a book with you if waiting may be necessary. Make plans for where to meet or call if plans fly out the window.
- Ask for written information and instructions to reduce the need for remembering details.
- Learn to revise time schedules. If you told a friend you would meet at noon and you are running late, is there any reason why the appointment can't be changed at 1:00?
- Schedule rest periods. You may want to set an alarm to tell you that it is time to rest. Knowing that you are going to rest on a regular basis can stop you from feeling guilty about doing it.
- Take a break from tasks to stretch, walk, relax or to enjoy the present moment.
- Get very practical: make an extra set of keys, update your telephone/address directory, keep the car and other important appliances in good working order, keep a good supply of small items you use all the time (e.g. batteries, stamps, change for the bus), and investigate the use of gadgets and devices that save time or effort.
- Don't try to answer the phone on the first ring. Let it ring. Consider buying an answer machine to "screen" your calls.
- Use your imagination to get yourself to an event you are not looking forward to. You need to visit a new doctor? Imagine what you are going to wear, what questions you want to ask, what questions will be asked of you. Think about the visit the way you would like it to be. Then imagine the worst thing that could happen and how you would deal with it.
- Take a cool shower after work or toward the end of the day. Let the water carry all your cares down the drain.
- Spend as much time as possible with people who aren't worriers
- Practise some form of stress management (e.g. relaxation) on a daily basis.
- Buy a packet of small blank adhesive labels. Print "R" on each and stick onto mirrors, the steering wheel of your car, your computer, the telephone, the fridge to remind you to relax throughout the day.

- ❑ If you find that you are breathing in a short, shallow pattern, it's time to take a break. To break the pattern, sit down for a minute. Take deep slow breaths and relax all your muscles.
- ❑ Learn to say no. You don't have to do anything if you don't have the time, energy or desire.
- ❑ Ask for help when you need it. Make your requests for help as specific as possible: "Would you please help me by..."
- ❑ Share concerns and responsibilities with others to lighten your load practically and emotionally.
- ❑ If old interests and activities become more difficult or too time consuming, replace them with new ones that fit your current needs.
- ❑ Make equal exchanges in your life. Do you find it stressful to travel to see your family and friends? Give yourself permission to use the same money to make regular phone visits.
- ❑ When you find a task more difficult or stress producing, try to find a better way of doing it. If you can't think of an easier way, ask a friend to help you look at the problem.
- ❑ Ask the MS Australia ACT/NSW/VIC for information and assistance.
- ❑ Use support and education services. Let the experiences of others help you solve your problems – and use your experiences to help others solve theirs.

Body Scan

This can be done anytime and anywhere –it can be practised both sitting in a chair or laying down symmetrically on your back on a soft mat on the floor or on your bed – arms beside you palm up or down

1. Begin by focusing on your feet, really feel into your feet – Image the muscles in your feet softening, loosening and relaxing, spend a couple of minutes imaging that all the muscles in your feet are relaxing.
2. Next focus on your calf muscles, again really try to feel into them. Feel the muscles softening, loosening and relaxing, imagine that your calf muscles are relaxing.
3. Next bring your attention to your thigh muscles, imagining those muscles relaxing.
4. Then gradually move up through the entire body – to your buttock, your stomach, all the muscles in your back, your hands, forearms, upper arms and keep going to include your shoulders, neck and face
5. Take your time - spending a few minutes on each group of muscles.

Mindfulness Meditation – Tips for regular practise

- To start - it will help to practice the Body Scan to relax your body - with your body relaxed it is easier to relax the mind
- Find a quiet space in your home or garden where you will not be disturbed. Somewhere where you feel safe and comfortable – it may take a little while to find a suitable space.
- Sitting meditation is more conducive to mindfulness meditation as you don't want to fall asleep. However, if you have pain or discomfort sitting – you can meditate laying down as per the body scan.
- Find a time during the day that you can fit the meditation into your schedule – people often find the morning is easier to mediate as your mind is less busy upon waking. However, you can meditate at any time of the day.
- Practising Mindfulness of breath is a good place to start. Remember that Mindfulness is about being in the present moment by bringing your attention to your senses – e.g. your breathing and to sounds.
- Mindfulness is about training your mind to not get caught up in your thoughts.
- Mindfulness Meditation is about training the brain – by changing the way we respond to our thoughts. It is NOT about stopping or changing or eliminating your thoughts.
- It helps to have guided instruction such as a CD or group or an App to talk you through the mindfulness meditation until you become more proficient.
- It requires gentle patience and perseverance to develop a regular practice.
- It is important to be kind and non-judgemental towards yourself whilst developing your practice – this is something that you are doing that is good for your health.
- Start with 5 minutes Mindfulness practise and build up to - 10-20 minutes of Mindfulness meditation 1-2 times a day over 8 weeks and you will start to experience the benefits and your brain will develop new neuronal pathways to support your practice. (Jon Kabat-Zinn 8 week mindfulness based stress reduction)

Diaphragmatic Breathing

The diaphragm is the most efficient muscle of breathing. It is a large, dome-shaped muscle located at the base of the lungs. Your abdominal muscles help move the diaphragm and give you more power to empty your lungs. Diaphragmatic breathing is intended to help you use the diaphragm correctly while breathing to:

- Strengthen the diaphragm
- Decrease the work of breathing by slowing your breathing rate
- Decrease oxygen demand
- Use less effort and energy to breathe

Diaphragmatic breathing technique



1. Lie on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head supported. You can use a pillow under your knees to support your legs. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.



2. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.



3. Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips. The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible.

When you first learn the diaphragmatic breathing technique, it may be easier for you to follow the instructions lying down, as shown on the first page. As you gain more practice, you can try the diaphragmatic breathing technique while sitting in a chair, as shown below.

To perform this exercise while sitting in a chair:

1. Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.



2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.

3. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.

4. Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips. The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible.

Note: You may notice an increased effort will be needed to use the diaphragm correctly. At first, you'll probably get tired while doing this exercise. But keep at it, because with continued practice, diaphragmatic breathing will become easy and automatic.

How often should I practice this exercise?

At first, practice this exercise 5-10 minutes about 3-4 times per day. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing this exercise, and perhaps even increase the effort of the exercise by placing a book on your abdomen.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Many studies have shown that relaxing one's muscles markedly reduces anxiety. Over time, people *learn* to be anxious and tense; in the same way, people can teach themselves how to relax. One way of learning how to relax is through Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR).

1. In order to learn to relax, it's important to practice at least 20 minutes a day, every day. Find a regular time (after waking, before bed, before meals) when you're sure not to be distracted. You may want to start with a longer (30 minute) relaxation period. As you get better and better at PMR, it will take less and less time to achieve the relaxation effects.
2. Before beginning relaxation, make sure you are in a quiet place, preferably with dim lighting. You may recline in a chair or lay on a couch or a bed during the relaxation, as long as you are comfortable (and won't fall asleep!). Turn on the fan or the air conditioner, close your eyes, and give yourself permission to shut out all the distractions of the day.
3. Practice relaxation on an empty stomach. Food digestion after meals will tend to disrupt deep relaxation. Wear comfortable clothes and take off shoes, glasses, jewelry, etc.
4. Make a decision not to worry about anything. Give yourself permission to put aside the concerns of the day. Allow taking care of yourself and having peace of mind to take precedence over any of your other worries. (Success with relaxation depends on giving peace of mind high priority in your overall scheme of values.)
5. Assume a detached attitude. Do not *try* to relax. Do not *try* to control your body or your thoughts. If you find your mind wandering, guide yourself gently back to the sensation in your muscles. The point is to allow yourself to let go, not to worry about your performance.
6. Be aware that PMR involves both tensing and relaxing your muscles. During this process, you may experience unusual sensations, such as tingling, warmth, or heaviness in your muscles as they relax. This is a normal process, and is generally a sign of increasing relaxation. However, if you are injured in any part of your body, you may want to avoid tensing that body part, and instead just focus on loosening and relaxing the muscles.
7. When you tense a particular muscle group, do so vigorously for 7-10 seconds. Envision the muscle group tensing, and focus on feeling the buildup of tightness and strain.
8. When you release the muscles, do so abruptly, and then relax, enjoying the sudden feeling of limpness. Allow the relaxation to develop for at least 15-20 seconds.
9. Allow all the other muscles in your body to remain relaxed, as far as possible, while working on a particular muscle group.

This is a skill that takes a while to learn! The first few times you go through PMR, you might not feel very different. However, over time you will find it easier and easier to let go of your tension, and will begin to feel more and more relaxed.

PMR SBS

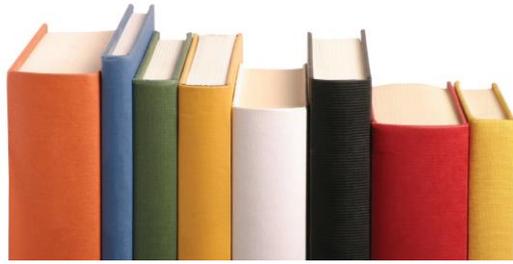
(Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Step By Step)

Once you are comfortably supported in a quiet place, follow the instructions for each muscle group below (or just listen along to your recording):

- 1) To begin, take three deep abdominal breaths, exhaling slowly each time. As you exhale, imagine that tension throughout your body begins to flow away.
- 2) Clench your **left fist**. Hold for 7-10 seconds, and then release for 15-20 seconds. Repeat with the **right fist**. (Use the same time intervals for all muscle groups.)
- 3) Tighten your **forearms** by straightening your fingers and pointing them at the ceiling, then back towards your body. Hold...and then relax.
- 4) Tighten your **biceps** by drawing your forearms up towards your shoulders and “making a muscle.” Hold...and then relax.
- 5) Shrug your **shoulders** up towards your ears, tightening the muscles. Hold...and then relax.
- 6) Wrinkle up your **forehead** and brow, focusing on the tension in the muscles...and then relax.
- 7) Squeeze your **eyes** shut as tightly as you can, feeling the tension in the muscles around the eyes. Hold...and then relax.
- 8) Clench your **jaw**, hard, flexing the muscles in your jaw and cheek. Hold...and then relax.
- 9) Press your **lips** together tightly, pursing them so the muscles around your mouth tighten...and then allow them to relax.
- 10) Press your head back against the chair or bed, hard, feeling the tension in the **back of your neck**. Hold...and then relax.
- 11) Allow your head to fall forward, as though trying to bury your chin in your chest, and feel the tension in the **front of your neck**. Hold...and then allow your head to fall back, very naturally.
- 12) Arch your back, sticking out your chest, and feel the tension in your **upper back**...and relax.
- 13) Take a deep breath and hold it, feeling the tightness in the muscles around your **chest**. Hold it...and then relax, breathing deeply from the abdomen.
- 14) Tighten the muscles of your **stomach**, making the stomach very hard. Hold...and relax.
- 15) Stretch both of your legs, straight out in front of you, until you can feel the tension in the backs of your **thighs**. Hold...and then relax.
- 16) Tense both **calf** muscles by stretching your feet and pointing your toes up toward your head. Hold...and then relax.



From: Goldfried & Davison, *Clinical Behavior Therapy*



Relaxation & Meditation Resources

All resources are available for loan from the MS Library at no cost
(If you would like to purchase any of the resources listed, please contact library staff)

Title	Author
Carer's relaxation (CD)	Commonwealth Resource Centre
Complementary and alternative medicine and multiple sclerosis (book)	Allen Bowling
Complementary and alternative medicine sourcebook (eBook)	Amy Sutton
The daily relaxer (book)	Matthew McKay
Daydreaming: Therapeutic relaxation (CD)	Peter McCallum Centre
Hurry up and meditate (book)	David Michie
Keeping the blues away (book)	Cate Howell
Meditation for beginners (book and CD)	Frank La Macchia
Meditation for dummies (eBook)	Stephen Bodian
Mindfulness (CD)	Craig Hassed
Relaxation, meditation, and mindfulness: A practical guide (eBook)	Jonathan Smith
Mindfulness for dummies (book and eBook)	Shamash Alidina
Relaxation (CD)	Marjorie Jane Scott
Yoga and multiple sclerosis: A journey to health and healing	Loren Fishman
Yoga tips for people with multiple sclerosis (eBook)	Sue Lee

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