



 Barts and The London
School of Medicine and Dentistry

Warwick
Medical School

COPERS STUDY

COping with persistent **Pain**, **E**ffectiveness **R**esearch
into **S**elf-management

Relaxation CD Training Pack



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Introduction

Relaxation is not all about sitting in front of the TV or having a glass of wine to chill out at the end of the day. It involves body awareness to gradually relax all of the muscles until the tension is released from your body and your mind is calm. There are different ways to help the relaxation process such as breathing exercises and mind focussing techniques like repeating a word such as “calm” or “relax” quietly in your head to help ‘still’ your mind.

For this relaxation course we are going to use ‘sequential muscle relaxation’ and breathing exercises as our basic relaxation sequence. We are then going to build on this using the mind focussing techniques of ‘visualisation’ and ‘mindfulness’ to help calm the mind.

What is sequential muscle relaxation?

Sequential muscle relaxation means you become aware of all of the areas of your body from top to toe in sequence and you concentrate on relaxing the muscles for each body area before you move on to the next. This ensures that you don’t forget to relax common areas that hold tension such as the forehead, jaw, shoulders and hands.

What are mind focussing techniques?

Visualisation is a technique where you use your imagination to recreate the details of a place where you would naturally feel more relaxed. This might be a favourite holiday destination, a familiar calming place you have experienced in the past or somewhere you may have read about. The idea is to focus your mind on recreating all the sights, sounds, smells and other sensations that you experience in this relaxing place. You become immersed and engrossed in the place.

Mindfulness is a type of meditation technique. Whilst sitting still and relaxing most people have a continuous stream of thoughts popping into the mind. One type of mindfulness exercise is to acknowledge each thought as it comes along and imagine placing it on leaf which floats away downstream (or on a cloud drifting past in the sky) then drawing your attention back to the present. The idea is not to fight the thoughts but to let them come and go naturally but returning your focus to your relaxation practice each time.

Both of these mind focussing techniques enhance the relaxation by calming the mind.

How can these techniques help me?

Relaxation benefits people with chronic pain in two main ways. First it reduces muscle tension and stiffness which may be contributing to your pain and secondly it calms the mind and improves mood which in turn helps to further reduce muscle tension. In addition you may also find that if practised regularly, your sleep patterns may improve and you have more energy as a result.

You might say that it’s too difficult to relax with chronic pain, but if you practise relaxation can be achieved even though your pain may not disappear completely.

Relaxation takes practice just like any other skill. When you become more accomplished at it you may find you are able to relax in any situation without the need for voice guidance. The benefits of relaxation increase if you can learn to relax your body in a noisy stressful situation or when you feel particularly anxious or agitated.

How do you know it works?

You might think that relaxation techniques and meditation skills are just for those practising yoga or tai chi but it is used in many healthcare fields. For example, people suffering from heart disease are encouraged to use relaxation techniques to reduce the amount of stress related hormones like adrenaline and cortisol in the blood which have negative impacts on the body's heart and blood circulatory system.

Arthritis support organisations (Arthritis Research UK and Arthritis Care) also recommend relaxation techniques for pain caused by muscle tension around joints. In addition, mental health charities such as the Mental Health Foundation and Mind support the use of relaxation techniques to reduce stress levels and anxiety.

Research in people with fibromyalgia, chronic pain, heart disease, low back pain and other chronic diseases has shown that relaxation and mind focussing techniques may have positive effects on physical function and self-confidence in ability to do things as well as improvements in mental health.

The COPERS team are interested in finding out how relaxation techniques impact on chronic pain sufferers in the long term. We have provided you with a CD to help you learn to relax.

What's on the CD?

The CD has 3 audio tracks on it suitable for playing on your computer or your CD player. If you would like the tracks in MP3 format for your portable music player you can either ask the study team to send you a CD with the MP3s or if you have an Internet connection you can download them from our COPERS website under the link 'patient information'

www.icms.qmul.ac.uk/chs/pctu/current_projects/copers/25507.html

The files are between 9 and 15 Mb in size.

TRACK 1: Relaxation and breathing (about 11 minutes)

TRACK 2: Relaxation and visualisation (about 12 minutes)

TRACK 3: Relaxation and mindfulness (about 11 minutes)

Suggested Training Programme

Getting started

When you start the training, try to find somewhere quiet and peaceful. This will help you to concentrate. Also make sure you have enough time to spare, you will need about 10 minutes.

Making yourself comfortable

Ensure that as much of your body is supported as possible including your arms and feet. You can be lying down or seated (after a lot of practice people can relax whilst standing and in any environment). If you are seated use the arms of the chair to rest your arms with your feet flat on the floor. Make sure your legs and arms are not crossed. Don't worry if you have to shift around and move a bit during the relaxation; just make sure you are as comfortable as you can be. Finally, make sure you are warm, particularly your hands and feet.

You can practise relaxation at any time of the day. You may find that the relaxation sends you to sleep. This is fine but make sure that you do not have any pressing engagements or responsibilities that you should be alert for. It can be used to 'recharge your batteries' before they run down completely or it can be used to help you get to sleep.

You do not have to do all of the three relaxation exercises if you don't want to. Choose which one(s) works for you. If you find that you can't complete the whole guided session don't worry, just do as much as you can. Similarly, if you have time to stay in your relaxed state for longer than the voice guidance suggests to then feel free to do so. Think of it as beneficial 'time out' for yourself.

How often and when?

Try to do one of the relaxation practices **once** per day for the three weeks of the study and as much as you can thereafter.

It might be easier to incorporate it into your normal routine for example: before your morning coffee or at bed time.

Note: If you try the relaxation straight after a meal your body will probably go into a sleepy state while it digests food so you are more likely to doze off before you complete the relaxation sequence.

Further information

British Heart Foundation
www.bhf.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation
www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Get Self Help
www.getselfhelp.co.uk

COPERS MP3 downloads and further information about the study are available from
www.icms.qmul.ac.uk/chs/pctu/current_projects/copers/25507.html

Relaxation scripts

TRACK 1 – Relaxation and breathing

Script *(read slowly with a calm low voice)*

Please make yourself comfortable; ensuring that as much of your body is supported as possible including your arms and feet. If you are seated rest your arms on the arms of the chair, with your feet flat on the floor. Make sure your legs and arms are not crossed. Don't worry if you have to shift around and move a bit during the relaxation; just make sure you are as comfortable as you can be. Finally, make sure you are warm, particularly your hands and feet.

First, close your eyes, feeling your body supported and just listen to the noises around you. You may hear some noise outside, focus on it.....really listen to what you can hear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now focus on the noises in the room around you. What can you hear? Really listen to the sounds around you.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now become aware of the sound of your own breathing, in and out. Listen to the air as it moves around and through you, your abdomen gently rising and falling as you breathe.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now slow your breathing down, and take a slightly longer breath in, all the way in, and pause for a very small moment before you breathe out again. Let the breath out of your body nice and slowly and controlled, all the way out.

Remember, slow your breathing down, and take a slightly longer breath in, all the way in, and pause for a very small moment before you breathe out again. Let the breath out of your body nice and slowly and controlled, all the way out.

Just nice slow easy breathing, letting your body relax, feeling heavy and supported.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now you are going to focus on different parts of your body and just check that they are nice and relaxed.

First of all think about your feet, just relax them. All loose and floppy. Then your ankles and calves, nice and relaxed, letting any muscle tension disappear, nice and relaxed.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Focus on your knees, relax them, feel any tension disappear, breathing in and out.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now bring your attention to your upper legs. Make sure the muscles are relaxed. Breathe in and out and on the outward breath really relax and feel any tension disappear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Become aware of your buttocks, pressing down. Just relax, sinking down, nice and heavy, nice and relaxed.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now think about your lower back muscles. Breathe in and out, nice and slowly, nice and relaxed. Focus on your tummy muscles, letting everything go loose, just relax.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now to your shoulders. Let them hang into a relaxed position. Nice and loose. Let your arms feel nice and heavy, relaxed. Feel the tension disappear from your upper arms, your elbows, your forearms, your wrists, your hands and your fingers. Let everything relax, nice and loose nice and floppy.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Focus on the muscles in your neck, let them go, feel the tension disappear, let your neck relax. You're nice and relaxed nearly everywhere, so think about any tension you may hold in your head and face. Notice how your forehead feels, if it's creased and frowning let your eyebrows fall and your forehead smooth out. Let them relax, breathing in and out. Next think about your eyes, relax your eyes and also your cheeks, just let the tension drift away, breathe in and out.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Relax your jaw and relax your mouth. Feel your whole body nice and relaxed.

Enjoy this moment and know when you are tense you can always do this on your own and feel the tension disappear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Breathing nice and slowly, and start to become more aware of the sound of your breathing, in and out.

Now start to notice the sounds around you, gradually becoming more aware of the room, aware of your toes and your fingers.

And when you are ready just slowly open your eyes. Gently wiggle your fingers and toes. Breathe deeply and stretch.

END

TRACK 2 – Relaxation and visualisation. Script (*read slowly with a calm low voice*)

Please make yourself comfortable; ensuring that as much of your body is supported as possible including your arms and feet. If you are seated rest your arms on the arms of the chair, with your feet flat on the floor. Make sure your legs and arms are not crossed. Don't worry if you have to shift around and move a bit during the relaxation; just make sure you are as comfortable as you can be. Finally, make sure you are warm, particularly your hands and feet.

First, close your eyes, feeling your body supported and just listen to the noises around you. You may hear some noise outside, focus on it.....really listen to what you can hear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now focus on the noises in the room around you. What can you hear? Really listen to the sounds around you.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now become aware of the sound of your own breathing, in and out. Listen to the air as it moves around and through you, your abdomen gently rising and falling as you breathe.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now slow your breathing down, and take a slightly longer breath in, all the way in, and pause for a very small moment before you breathe out again. Let the breath out of your body nice and slowly and controlled, all the way out.

Remember, slow your breathing down, and take a slightly longer breath in, all the way in, and pause for a very small moment before you breathe out again. Let the breath out of your body nice and slowly and controlled, all the way out.

Just nice slow easy breathing, letting your body relax, feeling heavy and supported.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now you are going to focus on different parts of your body and just check that they are nice and relaxed.

First of all think about your feet, just relax them. All loose and floppy. Then your ankles and calves, nice and relaxed, letting any muscle tension disappear, nice and relaxed.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Focus on your knees, relax them, feel any tension disappear, breathing in and out.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now bring your attention to your upper legs. Make sure the muscles are relaxed. Breathe in and out and on the outward breath really relax and feel any tension disappear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Become aware of your buttocks, pressing down. Just relax, sinking down, nice and heavy, nice and relaxed.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now think about your lower back muscles. Breathe in and out, nice and slowly, nice and relaxed. Focus on your tummy muscles, letting everything go loose, just relax.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now to your shoulders, let them hang into a relaxed position. Nice and loose. Let your arms feel nice and heavy, relaxed. Feel the tension disappear from your upper arms, your elbows, your forearms, your wrists, your hands and your fingers. Let everything relax, nice and loose nice and floppy.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Focus on the muscles in your neck, let them go, feel the tension disappear, let your neck relax. You're nice and relaxed nearly everywhere, so think about any tension you may hold in your head and face. Notice how your forehead feels, if it's creased and frowning let your eyebrows fall and your forehead smooth out. Let them relax, breathing in and out. Next think about your eyes, relax your eyes and also your cheeks, just let the tension drift away, breathe in and out.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Relax your jaw and relax your mouth. Feel your whole body nice and relaxed.

Enjoy this moment and know when you are tense you can always do this on your own and feel the tension disappear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Whilst you are in this relaxed state, imagine a place where you can feel content, calm and happy.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Recall the details of this place. Whereabouts are you? What can you see around you? How are you passing the time? What are you wearing? Are you with anyone else? What are they doing in this scene? Really focus in on the details of the scene.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Consider the air temperature. Can you feel any sensations on your skin? Are there any smells or sounds. How do you feel when you are here? Remember this place where you feel calm and happy. You can go back to it whenever you want.

I am going to pause for a moment now and let you enjoy your place of tranquillity and contentment.

Pause

Breathing nice and slowly, and start to become more aware of the sound of your breathing, in and out.

Now start to notice the sounds around you, gradually becoming more aware of the room, aware of your toes and your fingers.

And when you are ready just slowly open your eyes. Gently wiggle your fingers and toes. Breathe deeply and stretch.

END

Text adapted from <http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/imagery.htm>

TRACK 3 – Relaxation and mindfulness of thoughts

Script (*read slowly with a calm low voice*)

Please make yourself comfortable; ensuring that as much of your body is supported as possible including your arms and feet. If you are seated rest your arms on the arms of the chair, with your feet flat on the floor. Make sure your legs and arms are not crossed. Don't worry if you have to shift around and move a bit during the relaxation; just make sure you are as comfortable as you can be. Finally, make sure you are warm, particularly your hands and feet.

First, close your eyes, feeling your body supported and just listen to the noises around you. You may hear some noise outside, focus on it.....really listen to what you can hear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now focus on the noises in the room around you. What can you hear? Really listen to the sounds around you.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now become aware of the sound of your own breathing, in and out. Listen to the air as it moves around and through you, your abdomen gently rising and falling as you breathe.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now slow your breathing down, and take a slightly longer breath in, all the way in, and pause for a very small moment before you breathe out again. Let the breath out of your body nice and slowly and controlled, all the way out.

Remember, slow your breathing down, and take a slightly longer breath in, all the way in, and pause for a very small moment before you breathe out again. Let the breath out of your body nice and slowly and controlled, all the way out.

Just nice slow easy breathing, letting your body relax, feeling heavy and supported.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now you are going to focus on different parts of your body and just check that they are nice and relaxed.

First of all think about your feet, just relax them. All loose and floppy. Then your ankles and calves, nice and relaxed, letting any muscle tension disappear, nice and relaxed.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Focus on your knees, relax them, feel any tension disappear, breathing in and out.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now bring your attention to your upper legs. Make sure the muscles are relaxed. Breathe in and out and on the outward breath really relax and feel any tension disappear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Become aware of your buttocks, pressing down. Just relax, sinking down, nice and heavy, nice and relaxed.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now think about your lower back muscles. Breathe in and out, nice and slowly, nice and relaxed. Focus on your tummy muscles, letting everything go loose, just relax.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Now to your shoulders. Let them hang into a relaxed position. Nice and loose. Let your arms feel nice and heavy, relaxed. Feel the tension disappear from your upper arms, your elbows, your forearms, your wrists, your hands and your fingers. Let everything relax, nice and loose nice and floppy.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Focus on the muscles in your neck, let them go, feel the tension disappear, let your neck relax. You're nice and relaxed nearly everywhere, so think about any tension you may hold in your head and face. Notice how your forehead feels, if it's creased and frowning let your eyebrows fall and your forehead smooth out. Let them relax, breathing in and out. Next think about your eyes, relax your eyes and also your cheeks, just let the tension drift away, breathe in and out.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Relax your jaw and relax your mouth. Feel your whole body nice and relaxed.

Enjoy this moment and know when you are tense you can always do this on your own and feel the tension disappear.

Pause (count slowly 1 and 2 and 3 and 4)

Whilst in your relaxed state, start to notice the thoughts that come into your mind. As you notice each thought, imagine putting those words onto a leaf as it floats by on a stream. Put each thought that you notice onto a leaf, and watch it drift on by, meandering on the surface of the water. There's no need to look for the thoughts, or to remain alert waiting for them to come. Just let them come, and as they do, place them onto a leaf.

Your attention will wander, particularly so at first, and that's okay - it's what your mind does. As soon as you notice your mind wandering, gently bring your focus back to the thoughts, placing them onto the leaves and watching them drift by.

Pause and give about 1 minute to allow time to visualise

Breathing nice and slowly, and start to become more aware of the sound of your breathing, in and out.

Now start to notice the sounds around you, gradually becoming more aware of the room, aware of your toes and your fingers.

And when you are ready just slowly open your eyes. Gently wiggle your fingers and toes.
Breathe deeply and stretch.

END

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