

## **Benefits of Relaxation**

Emma Stein, Ph.D.

While many think of relaxation as kicking back or unwinding, relaxation is actually a skill that can be learned. Relaxation can be a very effective way of coping with stress, pain, and other problems.

The benefits of relaxation are numerous, and include lowered heart rate, decreased blood pressure, heightened immunity, reduced pain and tension, improved mood, and better sleep.

Start by carving out some time each day, even just five minutes, to engage in relaxation. Find a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be interrupted, and try one of the following techniques:

- Deep breathing- focus on taking slow, deep, even breaths.
- Imagery- use your mind to focus on soothing images, such as a peaceful place
- Progressive muscle relaxation- slowly tense and then relax each muscle group

There are many resources available for guidance in learning these techniques. To learn more, try:

- Apps: "Calm," "Headspace"
- UCSD Center for Mindfulness guided meditations-  
<https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx>
- Relaxation scripts- <http://www.allaboutdepression.com/relax/>
- UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center guided meditations-  
<http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>