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Always consult your doctor on any health matter

RELAXATION AND YOU

A six lesson course to follow in the comfort of your own home
by Eileen Hewitson

LESSON TWO

So now let us continue with the practice of relaxation at home. Try to keep up the exercise of letting go physically just for two minutes. This can bring great benefits so do try to find the time (after all it is only two minutes) to do it as often as possible:

- When you sit down in your favourite armchair with a cup of tea
- Just as you get into the car but before setting out on your journey
- At the traffic lights
- On the bus or when you get into bed
- Look for your own particular times to suit your way of life.

Another way of increasing relaxation in the body is by paying particular attention to the breathing. The breathing is something that we tend to take very much for granted (unless you are an opera singer or diving for pearls in the South Pacific). So from time to time, concentrate on your breath - just watch it enter the body and leave the body. Observe the gentle rhythm that comes with breathing easily and effortlessly.

Now try to slow the breath down by taking 3 or 4 slow even breaths in and out through the nose. Try to make the IN breath take the same amount of time as the out breath. As you breathe out let go of tension particularly in the jaw, neck, shoulders and abdomen. This has a calming effect and can be combined with other rhythms, like that of walking ... so, for example, you can breathe in for 3 steps and out for 3 steps.

Another exercise to do whilst sitting or standing still is to breathe in and out through the nose and then just stay quietly without breathing in again, for a few seconds, watching the space between that breath and the next. Let no strain enter the body, just breathe in again when you feel the need. You are looking for control and the slowing down of the breath for a couple of minutes, and this can be an aid to greater concentration.

The beauty and strength of the breathing exercises are that you can do them anywhere and at any time, standing, walking, sitting or lying down. They can be extended and control of the abdominal muscles can be introduced and combined with breath control. You will find more breathing exercises in books on Stress Managements, Relaxation, Yoga etc. so take an interest in learning to control your breath. Practise when you feel good, so that at times of stress you will, almost automatically, be able to restore calm and balance.

Let's finish with a quotation by Marie Curie who said, "Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood." Have fun practising, until we meet again.

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