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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 FOUR

To take your relaxation with you, you need it to become a habit (a good one) - one that will come automatically to you in all circumstances.

Remember that relaxation is a technique that needs to have time set aside and to be practised regularly; it will not be achieved overnight, but, if we can take a relaxed attitude with us into our everyday routine, we can benefit even further.

So the next time you are sitting watching the television, or reading a book, or listening to the radio, look at yourself. Are your legs crossed, causing unnecessary strain? Are your shoulders raised, instead of being relaxed downwards? Is your jaw tight and forehead furrowed, perhaps in an effort to concentrate, or to hear and understand more clearly? When you are talking to someone, do you find one foot going up and down? You may observe this behaviour in someone else first, so develop an **awareness** of it in yourself. Or the next time you walk down the road, observe yourself. Are your shoulders hunched, in your haste to reach your destination? Are your teeth clenched or is your back bent?

The raised shoulders, the tight jaw, the furrowed forehead, the clenched teeth, the bent back in no way aid our ability to achieve what we desire - to sit comfortably or to walk easily. Indeed they are taking up precious energy, that we could well use in some other pursuit. If we can learn to use only those muscles that are necessary to sit or to walk, and to use only that amount of energy that is necessary to do whatever it is we are doing, the rest of the body can relax, and the energy that we conserve, we can use to enjoy ourselves just that little bit more.

So, while we are walking, we avoid rushing, just taking everything in our stride; and while we are sitting, we are using only those muscles that are necessary to sit. So, no matter where we are, or who we are with, or what we are doing, we need to expend only the energy and effort necessary to accomplish the task in hand. Indeed, because we are not so tired at the end of the day, sleep will come much more easily and naturally.

Look at yourself at this moment, and acquire the gentle habit of doing this many times during each day for the next few weeks - whether you are sitting, standing, walking, waiting, talking. Do it twenty, thirty, forty times a day, it does not matter, so that you build up an **automatic** awareness of when and where you are unnecessarily tense. Use those waiting moments to your own benefit - whilst waiting for the kettle to boil, for someone to answer the telephone, for the bus or train to come, for a visitor to arrive, and so on. Instead of becoming frustrated at the delay, look at yourself, and ask yourself "Can I let my shoulders roll down a little bit? Can I smooth my forehead? Can I let my jaw relax so that my teeth are a little bit apart and my lips just softly touching?"

And take this practice with you until we meet again.

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