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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 SIX

You have within you with most wonderful tool for helping you to create a feeling of wellbeing - and this is your **imagination**. We are already probably pretty good at imagining the worst that can happen - a downpour at the Summer Fete, accidents, redundancy, illness - a couple of sneezes and we are already imagining that we have a bout of flu that is going to lay us low for at least four days and that means that we are not going to be able to do such and such or see so and so and before we know it we have, in our mind, spent the whole week at home trying to rearrange our lives. And the next morning we wake up feeling as fit as a fiddle (where does that expression come from, I wonder?) See what I mean?

Well, we can use this same ability to present to ourselves the best possible scenario, we can talk ourselves **up** and the body will respond appropriately by releasing tension, and functioning without any undue strain.

So start by seeing yourself in a place where you feel utterly at ease, completely calm. It may be a favourite spot you have, or somewhere you have visited on holiday. It need not be a real place at all, but one you have made up within your own imagination. You want to try to make the picture as complete as possible, so pay attention in turn to the colours and shapes of the things around you, to the sounds around you, to the smells and tastes that are on the air, to the feel and textures of the things around you, beneath your feet, above your head, even the feel of the clothes upon your body. Maybe you are sitting by some water, and you can dip your hand in, sensing the coolness and freshness of it. Maybe you are by the seashore and can hear the waves and feel them gently lapping over your feet and then you can feel the sand between your toes. Maybe you are in a garden, or in the country and the colours and perfumes of the flowers and blossoms are overwhelming.

Work on this image over several sessions, so that it becomes clearer and more familiar each time, and indeed you can add more details as you get better at using your imagination. Link the things around you with feelings of calmness, strength, security, comfort, happiness, harmony and well being or whatever you need. And then, without any effort on your part, your body and mind will relax. You are going to have to practise but the images come more easily and quickly with time, so that you can eventually transport yourself to this wonderful place in a split second and feel yourself relaxing immediately and enjoying all those beneficial feelings within you.

Then, be prepared to recreate the **feelings** that you experience in your own special place at those time during your daily routine, when you find yourself becoming unnecessarily tense, worried, angry, frustrated. Recall your special place to mind and the unhappy feelings will fade away. It really does work!

Over the past six lessons, you will have learned that no expensive equipment or special place is needed for you to practise relaxation. The abilities to relax are all within you. Be kind to yourself, be gentle with yourself, look after yourself and you will greatly benefit. So too, will those around you as they see the calm and strong person that you now are.

Reviewed in April 2008