

Jamison: Patient Education and Wellness

HANDOUT 18.6: PHYSICAL STRATEGIES

Tips for stress management:

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A quieting response

This takes only seconds to perform and can be done standing, sitting or lying and in any social situation. Repeat as often as is convenient.

- smile inwardly
- think: 'alert mind, calm body'
- draw a long deep breath
- hold for a couple of seconds
- exhale slowly and completely
- as you exhale, let your jaw, shoulders and arms drop and feel the relaxation extend to the rest of your body down to your toes

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Focused breathing

In tense situations, any of the following can be used:

- concentrate/focus your attention on your breathing
- breathe slowly and deeply
- use diaphragmatic breathing: hold your ribcage as still as possible and breathe with your stomach

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Muscle relaxation techniques

A variety of techniques can be used to reduce muscle tension. Notice the decrease in tension when you relax after:

- stretching tall and wide like a cat
- doing shoulder–arm relaxation: let your arms hang loosely by your sides; rotate each arm, starting with the hands and extending up to the shoulder; allow your arms to swing loosely
- alternate tension–relaxation exercises: tense a group of muscles, e.g. neck and shoulder, hold for 5–10 seconds, relax. Repeat a few times
- isometric tension reliever exercises: push against an immovable object, rest, repeat
- rotation exercises: rotate your shoulders, roll your head
- muscle loosening: become aware of any tense muscles and deliberately loosen or relax them
- jogging in place: run on the spot for 3 minutes or take a 5-minute walk
- soothing muscle stimulation: massaging or slapping muscles can improve blood flow and relaxation

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Progressive deep muscle relaxation

Progressive deep muscle relaxation requires roomy clothing and a quiet comfortable location where you can be undisturbed for 15 to 30 minutes. The stages in progressive deep relaxation draw from techniques previously discussed. They involve:

- lying down in a comfortable position

- starting from the toes and moving up to the head:
 - stretching and tightening muscles
 - releasing and relaxing muscles
- scanning the body mentally to identify:
 - areas of muscle tension that need particular attention
 - breathing patterns and implementing diaphragmatic breathing if necessary
 - mental distractions and letting them go
- becoming aware of an inner peacefulness
- slowly stretching and returning to the present

CREATIVE APPROACHES

<http://www.webmd.com/video/reducing-stress>

DIETARY STRATEGIES

<http://www.webmd.com/diet/diet-for-stress-management-slideshow>

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