

## Relaxation Techniques

Hospitalization is stressful--for children, for parents, and even for health providers. Rather than reach for a cigarette, or a bag of chips, try to learn some relaxation techniques.

This one is a classic. Feel the difference in your body.

- Take a deep breath in, way down into your abdomen. As you breathe out, let your whole body begin to relax.
- Curl both fists, tightening forearms, biceps, and pectoral muscles (Charles Atlas bodybuilder pose). Hold for **seven seconds** and relax. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your arms and chest.
- Wrinkle up your forehead. Hold for **seven seconds** and relax. At the same time, roll your head clockwise in a complete circle, then roll your head back the other way. Feel the relaxation in your forehead.
- Make your face like a walnut: frown, squint your eyes, pinch your lips and hunch your shoulders all at once. Hold it for **seven seconds** and relax. Notice how it feels to relax your face and shoulders.
- Gently arch your back and take a deep breath into your chest. Hold the position, and hold your breath. Relax.
- Take a deep breath, pushing your tummy way out. Hold it for **seven seconds** and then relax. **Feel** your back and stomach relax.
- Now flex your feet and toes. Tighten your buttocks, thighs, and calf muscles. Hold **seven seconds** and relax.
- Point your toes out (like a ballerina) and again tighten your buttocks, thighs, and calves. Relax after **seven seconds**. Feel how your body has relaxed from head to toe.

[The Daily Relaxer, by Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning (Oakland CA: New Harbinger Pub., 2006)]

For more relaxation techniques, try these resources in the Kreamer Family Resource Center

For the patient:

Barksy--Stop being your symptoms and start being yourself: the 6 week mind-body program to ease your chronic symptoms

Dunn Buron--When my autism gets too big: a relaxation book for children with autism spectrum disorders

Huddleston--Prepare for surgery, heal faster: a guide of mind-body techniques

Karu--Henry and the White Wolf (picture book for children)

Miles--Imagine a rainbow: a child's guide for soothing pain (imagery and relaxation)

Mills--Little Tree: a story for children with serious medical problems (picture book)

Seaward--Essentials of managing stress

Temes--The tapping cure: a revolutionary system for rapid relief from phobias, anxieties, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and more (2006 book)

Thomas--The power of relaxation: using tai chi and visualization to reduce children's stress

Weiss--Breathe easy: young people's guide to asthma (includes relaxation techniques)

For everybody:

MacLean—Peaceful piggy meditation (picture book)

McKay--Daily relaxer: relax your body, calm your mind, & refresh your spirit

Seaward--Essentials of managing stress

For smokers:

Benner--Relaxing to quit [sound recording]

**WWW:**

Relax: Techniques to help you achieve tranquility (Mayo Clinic)

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/relaxation-technique/SR00007>

Relaxation Techniques for Relief of Anxiety & Stress by Susan M. Lark, M.D. (ignore the ads) <http://www.healthy.net/asp/templates/article.asp?PageType=article&ID=1205>

Relaxation techniques to help you sleep (University of Maryland Medical Center)

[http://www.umm.edu/sleep/relax\\_tech.html](http://www.umm.edu/sleep/relax_tech.html)

*See also books about stress, anxiety, yoga, massage, etc.*

*Note: Turning Point, the Center for Hope and Healing offers free programs to support patients with serious or chronic physical illness, as well as their friends and families. These services include yoga, relaxation, acupuncture, and emotional support.*

These resources and others are available in the Kreamer Family Resource Center, ground floor of the Sutherland Tower in Children's Mercy Hospital, or call 816-234-3900 to arrange pick up from the Children's Mercy South Information desk. If you are not a patient of Children's Mercy Hospital & Clinics, books may be borrowed through Interlibrary Loan: contact your local librarian to arrange this.

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Kreamer Family Resource Center  
Children's Mercy Hospitals & Clinics  
2401 Gillham Road  
Kansas City MO 64108  
816-234-3900



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[www.childrens-mercy.org](http://www.childrens-mercy.org)