



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Relaxation can help with anxiety and stress. Some who have had breast cancer feel that relaxation calms and quiets the mind and muscles. What is relaxing for one person may not be relaxing for another person. Below are some ways to relax that may help you handle your feelings of fear and anxiety. Try some of them.

- A very simple relaxation practice is to tighten your fists, breathe in deeply and hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out slowly and let your arms and hands go limp like a rag doll.
- Yawning can also help you to relax.
- Listen to peaceful music or relaxation tapes. Some of these tapes have nature sounds such as birds, ocean and forest noises. You can pick a place that is peaceful and comforting to you.
- Try some slow, steady, controlled breathing.
- Sit in a comfortable position and relax all your muscles.
- Close your eyes or focus on a distant object if you prefer to keep them open.
- Breathe in and out slowly and comfortably through your nose. Count up from 1-4 as you breathe in and back from 4-1 as you breathe out.
- Feel yourself relax and go limp each time you breathe out.

Muscle Tension and Release

- Lie down in a quiet room.
- Take a slow, deep breath.
- As you breathe in, tense one muscle or group of muscles. For example, clench your teeth or stiffen your arms or legs.
- Keep your muscles tense for a second or 2 while holding your breath.
- Then breathe out, release the tension, and let your body relax completely. Repeat the process with another muscle or muscle group.



Copyright © 2016 BCEI

Used with the permission of the Young Breast Cancer Survivorship Network



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Progressive Relaxation is a lot like muscle tension and release. In this practice you will follow the same process, but start at your feet and slowly move up your body until you have completely relaxed.

Mental Imagery

- Close your eyes, breathe slowly, and feel yourself relax.
- Imagine a ball of healing energy, the hand of God or some other healing force inside your body.
- When you see the healing force, slowly breathe in and blow it to any part of the body where you feel pain, tension or discomfort, such as nausea.
- When you breathe out, picture the air moving the force away from your body, taking with it any painful or uncomfortable feelings.
- Keep the force moving toward you and away from you each time you breathe in and out. You may see it getting bigger and bigger as it takes away more and more tension and discomfort.

Visualization is similar to imagery. With visualization you create an inner picture that stands for your fight against cancer. You might visualize a battle scene with soldiers or knights fighting off the cancer in your body or a video game where you shoot the cancer cells as they approach down a screen.

Biofeedback

With training in biofeedback you can control body functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension. With professional help you are connected to a machine that will sense and alert you when your body shows signs of tension. The machine will also give you feedback when you relax your body. Over time, you no longer need the machine to control your relaxation responses. Your doctor or nurse can refer you to someone trained in teaching biofeedback if you think this method would benefit you.



Copyright © 2016 BCEI

Used with the permission of the Young Breast Cancer Survivorship Network



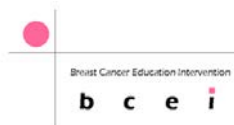
RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

When Do You Need To Seek Help?

Anxiety and anxious thoughts are also signs of being depressed. Call your health team if you're anxious and your thoughts are causing problems with your sleep, if you are crying all the time, if your fears keep you from doing things you used to enjoy or if you would like a referral to a counselor or support group.

Useful Websites:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBfwkCZHfH4>
- <http://www.cancercare.org/publications/54-relaxation-techniques-and-mind-body-practices-how-they-can-help-you-cope-with-cancer>
- http://www.breastcancer.org/treatment/comp_med/types/muscle_relax



Copyright © 2016 BCEI

Used with the permission of the Young Breast Cancer Survivorship Network