



## Information Sheet: Relaxation

### Why do we need to relax?

The pace of life is getting faster; expectations are higher; demands are greater. Work, social and family pressures, plus those we put on ourselves, can all pile up. Our stress levels can begin to get out of control. So it is important to find time each day relax.

It isn't always easy to find the time, but if you can find a bit of space in your day to practice some relaxation techniques, you can soon find a sense of well-being.

Remember - your personal needs are important too. If you practice for about 15 – 20 minutes each day, you will feel calmer and more relaxed. Relaxation is about the mind, not just the body. The exercise below will help you relax both physically and mentally.

### Helpful hints on how to relax:

- Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Sit or lie somewhere comfortable. It is better if the chair is upright and the floor firm so that you will not fall asleep - this does not necessarily calm the mind. You can close your eyes or leave them slightly open.
- Focus on your body. Begin by easing tension from each muscle area, working methodically down from the face, shoulders, abdomen to the legs and feet. By tensing each set of muscles and then releasing them the body starts to feel relaxed.
- Now concentrate on your breathing and begin taking nine deep breaths, slowly and evenly. Feel the air entering and leaving your nostrils until there is an even rhythm. The whole body begins to feel lighter as you feel the abdomen gently rising and falling.

- Carry on now with regular breathing, gently in and out. As you do so, some unwanted thoughts or worries might come into your mind. Just let them come in and go out again. Trying to stop these thoughts can make them more pronounced. Just continue with your breathing, concentrating on the air going in through your nostrils and out of your mouth.
- Sometimes it is helpful to visualise a place that feels relaxing for you, such as a garden, seashore or woodland etc. Just enjoy the sense of calm and carry on with your relaxation.

Complementary therapies can also help you to relax. Yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, massage, reflexology, herbalism, Bach flower remedies, homeopathy, and hypnotherapy can all be helpful. Some people find listening to gentle music can be relaxing.

### **What CCL offers:**

If you find it especially difficult to relax, it might help to talk to someone in confidence about what is making you tense. You can be referred by your GP to our free NHS Counseling Service or self-refer to our Co-payment Counseling Service by contacting us directly.

### **Other sources of information:**

[www.helpguide.org/index.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/index.htm) and search 'relaxation'. 'Mindfulness' may also help you relax: [www.getselfhelp.co.uk/mindfulness.htm](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/mindfulness.htm) (there are links here too to relaxation tips).

There are plenty of books available to buy, or borrow from the library. Some come with useful CDs: try '[Relaxation For Dummies](#)' (Book & CD) by Shamash Alidina (2011).