
The Relaxation Response

Adapted from Herbert Benson, M.D.

What you require to meditate

- 1) a quiet environment

- 2) a mental device such as a word or a phrase which should be repeated in a specific fashion over and over again. This will be your **mantra**. –
Some examples
 - a) “He- Wa”, as a short form for Health & Wellness.
 - b) “Han-Sa”, meaning “I am that”

It is best to think of something that is meaningful to you. – the purpose of the repetition of this mantra is to prevent distracting thoughts – the passive attitude allows the thoughts to drift in and out with ease.

You may also try to techniques to avoid distracting thoughts

- a) try gazing at an object that is not stimulating
 - b) you may say “No I don’t need you” to the thoughts
 - c) you may hold a smile during your meditation
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- 3) the adoption of a passive attitude, which is perhaps the most important of the elements. This is extremely important because you must passively disregard any distracting thought and softly bring yourself back to your mantra or concentration on you breathing alone. You should not be worried about doing the technique correctly

 - 4) a comfortable position- sitting is often best as lying down can cause you to fall to sleep.

 - 5) Practice of these elements for 5 – 20minutes per day, 1 – 2 times per day

During stress a fight or flight response is evoked, a part of the involuntary nervous system called the sympathetic nervous system becomes highly active. The involuntary, or autonomic, nervous system deals with everyday bodily functions that normally do not come into consciousness, such as the maintenance of heart beat and blood pressure, regular breathing, the digestion of food. When the fight or flight response is evoked it brings into play the sympathetic nervous system which acts by secreting specific hormones: adrenalin or epinephrine and noradrenalin or norepinephrine. These hormones bring about the physiologic changes of increased blood pressure, heart rate and body metabolism. The Relaxation Response has been proven to lower these increases thereby assisting in a healthier way of living.

Now combine the above meditation techniques with the following exercise:

- 1) Find a nice quiet place where you can sit or lie down
- 2) focus on the sensation of heaviness in your limbs
- 3) focus now on the sensation of warmth in your limbs – if you have trouble feeling this sensation, try to squeeze and release every muscle group from one end of the body to the other
- 4) focus on deep breathing while you passively concentrate
- 5) you should notice your heart beat decrease and you will be relaxed considerably within 5 minutes