







# RELAXATION EXERCISE\*

## ▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

-  **Time:** 10 minutes
-  **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:
  - Practice a relaxation technique to help reduce stress and burnout.
-  **Training Method:** Large Group Activity
-  **In This Activity You Will...**
  - Ask participants to sit in their chairs and to follow the guided relaxation. (10 minutes)
-  **Materials:**
  - Guided Relaxation script
-  **Preparation:** None

## Instructions

1. Introduce the opener to this topic as different from the types of openers we usually use in the training. As opposed to being an energizer, this opener is actually a relaxation exercise, an appropriate way to start out today's session, which focuses on the different types of stressors that you may encounter in your work.
2. Read the guided relaxation exercise aloud to the participants.
3. At the end of the exercise, have participants open their eyes. Ask them how they feel. Remind participants that this is an exercise they can do anytime, anywhere to help them relieve some of the symptoms of stress.

## Summary

Wrap up session.

\* This module is part of the online toolkit Building Blocks to Peer Success. For more information, visit [http://www.hdwg.org/peer\\_center/training\\_toolkit](http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit). This module comes from the Comprehensive Peer Worker Training, Peer Advanced Competency Training (PACT) Project Harlem Hospital Center, Division of Infectious Diseases, 2008.

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## SESSION SCRIPT

### GUIDED RELAXATION SCRIPT

To begin, sit in a chair with your back straight. Place your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands in your lap.

Take a deep breath. And, as you slowly let it out, let your eyes close and feel yourself begin to relax. As you continue to breathe normally, think and feel the word “calm” with each exhalation of your breath. “Calm.” Let your eyes remain closed to eliminate distractions and help you learn to relax more rapidly.

Gently shift your attention to your hands lying in your lap. Clench your fists. While holding them clenched, pull your forearms up against your upper arms as far as you can. Pull your forearms up tight enough so you can feel the large muscle in your upper arms tighten. Hold it. Relax; just let your arms flop down into your lap, and notice the difference between tension and relaxation.

Gently shift your attention to your head and raise your eyebrows. At the same time, imagine moving your scalp down to meet your eyebrows. Don't worry if you can't feel your scalp; many people can't. Release that tension all at once, now. Just allow your forehead to smooth out.

Once again, raise your eyebrows and feel the muscles that are tense. Now try to let about half of the tension go from your forehead while keeping the remaining tension at a constant, even level. Now let half of that tension go and hold the remaining tension steady. And release half of that, so that you are maintaining just a tiny level of tension. And let all of that tension go. Learning to relax the forehead can be a key to relaxing much of the rest of your body even though you may not feel that the forehead muscle is tense.

Now tense all the muscles in your body, but do them in this sequence. Raise the tips of your toes as if to touch your shins and hold that while tensing your thighs, and then your buttocks. Take a deep breath and hold it. Clench your fists and tighten your upper arms. Grit your teeth and close your eyes tight. Hold it so you are tense all over. Now let go all at once. Don't ease off, but just let go and feel the tension leaving your body.

Take a deep breath. Hold it for a count of 4 and then let it out. As you let it out, think “Calm.” Once again, take a deep breath; hold it. As you let it out, think and feel “Calm.” Now slowly open your eyes.