



Relaxation- Modern And Yogic Perspectives

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Modern Perspectives

Definition

Relaxation refers to the muscles which are relatively free from tension and are at rest.

Degrees of Relaxation

The degree to which muscular tension can be reduced is variable. It is often possible to estimate the degree of relaxation achieved by gentle passive movement or by palpating the muscles or during massage and the fact that a patient falls to sleep during treatment is a simple proof that the method of obtaining general relaxation has been successful.

Technique

General relaxation

Support, comfort and a restful atmosphere are the basic conditions for general relaxation and may prove effective without additional methods.

A. Support

Various forms and modifications of the lying position are used to achieve full support of the body, the relative suitability of each one varying according to the condition of the patient and to individual preference. The weight of the body is thus effectively counterbalanced by the uniform upward pressure of a reciprocal surface, or by suspension, in a position of semi-flexion which obviates all mechanical tension on muscles or ligaments.

B. Comfort

In addition to support and individual preference in positioning, for which some suggestions have already been made, the ingredients of comfort include freedom to breathe deeply, warmth, abdominal quiescence and a mild degree of physical fatigue. Removal of constrictive clothing, such as corsets and belts, is essential and any garters, buttons or suspenders liable to cause pressure must be removed. The room should be warm, but should have a free supply of fresh air; in winter addition warmth can be supplied by light but warm blankets, a covered hot-water bottle at the feet, an electric blanket or by non-luminous infra-red irradiation, but care being taken to avoid overheating as this leads to restlessness. In home, a warm bath gives the most even and pleasing type of heat, but its soothing effect must not be ruined subsequently by vigorous rubbing with a towel. A light well-balanced meal, rhythmical physical activity of short duration such as brisk walk in the open air and attention to emptying the bladder before treatment are all conducive to general relaxation.

C. Restful atmosphere

As physical and mental relaxations are interdependent, an effort must be made to secure a state of mental rest. The treatment-room should be as quiet as possible, as many people for whom training in relaxation is prescribed are highly susceptible to the disturbing influence of noise. A room with low well-diffused light with green and peach furnishings gives a soft and warm glow and provides an ideal setting for relaxation. A simple explanation of the routine and any instructions required are given to the patient in language and terms which he can understand, so that any anxiety or fear of the unknown is removed.

D. Additional methods of promoting relaxation

Tension may persist in spite of the provision of conditions conducive to relaxation, in which case additional methods to help the patient may be employed. Under conditions of quiet and comfort the patient's mind may remain active and turn to mundane problems and anxieties with associated physical tension, in this case it may help him to concentrate on his own rhythm of breathing, which must be deep with a slight pause at the end of expiration. Expiration is a phase of relaxation and should be accompanied by a feeling of 'letting go' in the whole body.

Local relaxation

General relaxation takes time and is not always essential or desirable. Methods of obtaining local relaxation depend to some extent on the cause and distribution of the tension. Massage and passive movement both presuppose relaxation of the area under treatment. Relaxation is obtained of a specific area by the application to that area of the general principles already described for the whole body.¹

YOGIC PERSPECTIVES

Three types of relaxation techniques using the famous posture savasana are described.

1. Stretch and relax called instant relaxation technique-IRT
2. Breathing and feeling called quick relaxation technique-QRT
3. Part by part relaxation called deep relaxation technique-DRT

IRT (Instant Relaxation Technique)

This is done in 2phases with one minute duration by tightening (stretching) for about 20secs and relaxing for 40secs.

Method

Join the legs, heels and the toes in savasana position. Bring the arms by the side of the body, palms touching the thighs. Now start tightening the whole body, from toes to head part by part, tighten the toes, sensitize the soles of the feet, tighten the ankle joints, stretch and tighten the calf muscles, pull up the knee-caps and tighten them, tighten the thigh muscles, squeeze and compress the buttocks pull them inwards, exhale, suck in and tighten the abdominal muscles, form a fist of your palms and tighten them, stretch the arms, tighten them, inhale, expand the chest and tighten, keep the face smiling throughout. Now compress and tighten your face fully. Tightentighten.....tighten. Release and relax the whole body-let go. Let go, the legs apart, hands slightly

away from the sides, palms facing the ceiling. Eyes gently closed, face smiling. Relax the whole body completely.

QRT (Quick Relaxation Technique)

This is done in 3 phases with three minutes duration and one minute in each phase

- Observation of abdominal muscle movements 1 minute-5 rounds.
- In association with breathing, 1 minute- 6 times
- With feeling 1 minute.

Method

Lie down on the ground allowing the back to fully rest. Let the whole body collapse. Legs apart, hands slightly away from the body, palms facing the ceiling, eyes gently closed, face smiling.

1. Observation of Abdominal muscle movement

Bring your awareness to the abdomen. Feel the abdominal muscles moving up and down; bulging up and sinking down. The movements automatically and naturally become slow and regularized as you keep feeling and observing the same. Then consciously bulge the muscles a little more and again suck in a little more. There is no strain, haphazardness or jerky movement. It is natural and steady. One in and out, or up and down movement forms one round. Count mentally and continue doing for 5 rounds.

2. Synchronization with breathing

Synchronize the abdominal movements with the breathing. As you inhale, feel the upward movement of the abdominal muscles and as you exhale feel and observe the sinking down of the abdominal muscles. While inhaling, the abdomen bulges up while exhaling it sinks down. Inhale.....deeply; exhale..... completely. Feel the deep breath, go down to the lungs as you inhale and full exhalation emptying the lungs, each time. One inhalation and one exhalation together forms one round. Continue for five rounds.

3. Breathing with feeling

Each time you exhale, the body gets energized due to the supply of oxygen and becomes lighter. Each time you exhale, the body relaxes normally and normally. Feel it. Feel the whole body collapsing and sinking down, releasing all the stresses and tensions completely. Inhale deeply and exhale completely. Feel the effects of inhalation and exhalation. Feel the collapse of the body as if it is sinking down into the ground each time you exhale and the abdominal muscles go down. A little pause and as you inhale fully and the abdominal muscles start going up feel the whole body becoming light giving you a sensation of floating. Continue for 5 (five) rounds.

DRT (Deep Relaxation Technique)

This is done in 6 phases with 6 minutes duration doing part by part relaxation; by directing the attention of the mind on different parts of the body starting from the toes and ending with the head, a feeling of relaxation is propagated.

Phase 1

Lie down on your back in savasana legs apart, hands by the side of the body slightly away with palms facing the ceiling. Eyes gently closed, face smiling, collapse and relax your whole body. Bring your awareness to the tip of the toes, gently move your toes and relax them. Sensitize the soles and relax them, relax the feet, loosen the ankle joints, relax the calf muscles, pull up the knee-caps a little, release and relax them, relax the thigh muscles, collapse the buttocks, loosen and relax hip joints. Relax the waist and the pelvic regions. Completely relax and collapse all the parts of the body below the waist. R...e...l...a...x. Inhale and enhance the relaxation of the lower part of the body by chanting an 'A' kara. Feel the vibration in the lower parts of the body. Now the lower part of the body from waist down is fully relaxed.

Phase 2

Gently bring the awareness to the abdominal region. Observe the abdominal movements for a while. The abdominal muscles going up and down as you inhale and exhale – relax them. Bring the awareness to the chest; relax the chest muscles, rib cage, the lungs and the heart. Relax them. R...e...l...a...x. Feel the heart beat slow, steady and relaxed. Gently bring the awareness to the back, feel the back as if it is sinking down. The back muscles are collapsing, relax them. Relax the coccyx region; the lowest part of the vertebral column joined together, relax the muscles around them. Relax the sacral region of the back, relax the lumbar region, relax the dorsal region, relax the lower back and loosen all the vertebral joints one by one, relax the muscles and nerves round the backbone; relax the middle back and upper back muscles and totally relax. Relax the shoulder blades, loosen and collapse and relax the shoulders joints. Bring the awareness to the hands, shift the awareness to the tips of the fingers, gently move them a little and sensitize, relax the finger one by one, relax the palms, loosen and relax the wrist joints, relax the lower arms, fore arms, loosen and relax the elbow joints, relax the biceps and triceps, relax and collapse the whole hand, relax the shoulders. Relax the neck by turning the head right and left slowly and assume the most comfortable position for the head. Now inhale and enhance the relaxation in the middle part of the body by chanting an 'u' kara and feel the vibration in the middle part of your body.

Phase 3

Gently bring the awareness to the head region, relax chin muscles, loosen and relax the lower and upper jaws, relax the root of the teeth, relax the hard and soft palate, relax the lips – upper and lower lips, loosen and relax the cheek muscles with a smile, feel the cool air going in through the nostrils into the lungs touching the walls of nostrils. Feel the warm air coming out in the same way as you exhale. Relax your eyes, eye balls, eye lashes eye brows, eye lids. Relax the space between the eye brows. Relax your ears, inner outer and middle ear. Relax the temple region, the seat of emotions, relax the forehead, no frown there, it is smooth. Move the awareness to the back of the head, top of the head and the crown of the head. Relax the head region and totally relax. Have a glimpse of the whole head R.e..l..a.x Now inhale, chant a'm' kara. Feel the vibrations in the whole head region and also throughout the body.

Phase 4

Have a glimpse of the whole body lying down on the ground by observing the body from toes to head and relax it. Let all the muscles relax. Let go. Feel the whole body relaxing, release and relax the whole body. Let us resonate and vibrate the whole body with the resonant waves of 'A' kara, 'U' kara and 'M' kara. Let us do by chanting them in one single breath in a continuous smooth flow with no breaks A...u...m. And feel the shifting of vibration from lower to middle, to the upper part of the body from tip of the toes to the top of the head in a slow continuous fluid movement. Feel the entire body completely relaxing and becoming lighter and lighter.

Phase 5

Now let us go in for body apartness. Slowly feel that you are coming out of the body and visualize going up and up on to the ceiling and from there looking down at your inert physical body, lying on the ground. This develops objectivity and is vital to executives.

Phase 6

From there go up further into the open space, enjoying the feeling of space, enjoying the vast blue sky, merging into the very nature, expanding and shedding out the limitations of body and mind, merging into the all pervasive awareness being one with it. Merging with the infinite blue sky, limitless and full of creativity and freedom and bliss. The mind is tuned to the infinite, one with it. Tuned to that anantha samapthy, slowly come back to your body with mind full of bliss and happiness and slowly come back to full body consciousness. And in that silence, make a nine times resolve, a positive resolve that will help you through out the day, to keep you attuned to the infinity. Any positive resolve, a very small sentence of 4-5 words as for example; you are happy, you are healthy etc. Have full faith and belief in it. Gently move your whole body a little, give movement to your toes and fingers, move your head left and right. Feel the lightness, alertness, freshness and energy flowing throughout your body. Slowly bring your legs together, hands close to the body by the side of the body. Turn over to the left or the right side and come up when you are ready to, any comfortable sitting posture without disturbing the inner peace and calmness. Eyes gently closed, face smiling.²

REFERENCES

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