

# Here are tips for learning to relax

PEOPLE often tell us to relax, but sometimes it's easier said than done.

We have found, however, that there are effective ways to exert control over our bodies in ways that were once considered impossible. We can train our bodies to lower blood pressure, decrease heart rate and raise skin temperature.

We can also train our bodies to reverse the snowballing levels of tension that develop during the course of our daily routine.

HERE'S A SIMPLE but highly effective method for training your body to relax on your command.

Find a quiet place, and get into a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Try to visualize yourself sitting in a very peaceful setting, perhaps at the beach or in forest during autumn.

Make a tight fist, and hold it for 15 or 20 seconds. Focus all of your attention on the body sensations of discomfort; try to picture the muscles stretching and straining and the blood vessels becoming constricted.

Then say to yourself "Relax" and at the same time release the tight fist. Focus on the dramatic difference as the musculature relaxes and normal blood flow is restored.

REPEAT THE above step, first with both fists, then with the muscles in your arms.

The pattern of tensing muscles, focusing on the discomfort, and then telling yourself "Relax" as you release the pressure is then applied successively to your neck/shoulders, jaw, facial muscles, abdomen, groin, thighs, calves, and feet one set of muscles at a time.

Finally, before ending the exercise, focus briefly on your breathing, take a slow deep breath, hold it for a few moments, and then tell yourself "Relax" as you exhale. Repeat this breathing technique a few times.

Each time you exhale, try imagining your body becoming so limp that it "melts" into your chair.

IF YOU PRACTICE this relaxation exercise daily for a number of weeks, you will be pleasantly surprised by just how effective it can be. By focusing on your body sensations for 20 minutes, you're taking your mind off the pressures of the day and giving it a 20-minute rest.

## New careers for teachers seminar

An all-day seminar entitled "Alternative Career Options for Teachers" will be held 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 9, in the Southfield Holiday Inn.

Sponsored by the Oakland University Continuum Center, it will include presentations by former teachers who have made successful career changes. Basic job search tactics and strategy, as well as defining classroom skills that can be transferred to other settings, will be featured.

The \$40 cost includes materials and lunch. Registration is required and can be made by calling 370-3033.

The seminar will be conducted by Judy Hopkin, a career specialist at the OU Continuum Center.



psychology  
**Dennis Sugrue**

**We can train our bodies to lower blood pressure, decrease heart rate and raise skin temperature.**

You will also be reversing the natural tensing the occurs in the body as the normal day progresses. Many people find the exercise very helpful on those nights when falling asleep is very difficult.

Most important of all, by repeating this procedure daily for a number of weeks, you are conditioning your body to become automatically limp whenever it hears the word "Relax."

THE BODY comes to associate the release of muscular tension with this word, just as Pavlov's famous dog came to salivate every time it heard a bell ring.

You can take full advantage of this new conditioning by telling yourself to "Relax" 10 or 15 times a day. Each time that you do so, take 30 seconds or so and repeat the breathing part of the relaxation exercise.

You can do this easily without disrupting whatever you're doing. By doing so throughout the day, you are building little "hills" into the snowballing of the day's tension.

BUILD REMINDERS into your day to relax. Some people will use a ringing telephone as a

signal to tell themselves to relax and to focus on their breathing.

People who are on the road a great deal of time during the day may use a red traffic light as their signal.


Other people have placed a small piece of white tape on the face of their watch or clock. Each time they check the time, the tape catches their eye and reminds them to relax.

Because of the fast pace in which our world moves and because of our growing awareness of how stress can contribute to many fatal diseases, learning to effectively relax has become a necessary skill for survival.

Relax!

Dr. Sugrue is a clinical psychologist at Henry Ford Hospital. He welcomes questions and topics for future articles, but is unable to answer questions on an individual basis. Questions and topics may be sent to this newspaper.

### SCHOOL PROBLEMS



- Lack of motivation
- Poor grades
- Hyperactive
- Withdrawn
- Disruptive classroom behavior
- Easily distractible
- Bored
- Not completing work
- Difficulty relating with peers
- Underachieving

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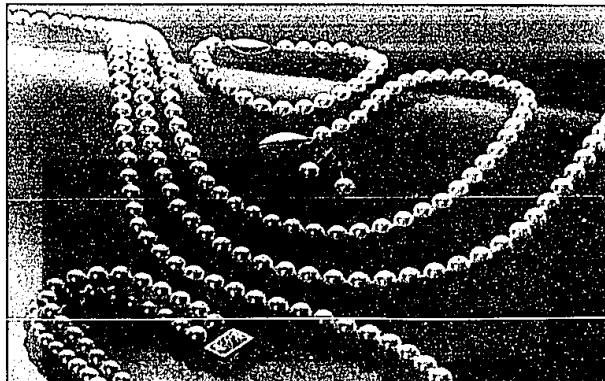
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