

Effective Rest and Relaxation

Effective Rest and Relaxation (ERR) is an essential part of activity management, as it allows you to re-charge physically and mentally. Research shows that it can lower the stress response in the body and strengthen the immune system.

During rest, there is minimal body and brain activity, thus energy is conserved.

CFS/ME often imposes episodes of unwelcome rest, following over-exertion. This can be very frustrating. Effective rest, however, is different, as you implement it as part of your activity programme and thus get back in charge.

Relaxation is a specific technique which can help you towards deeper rest states or even sleep. We know that during ERR brain waves switch from busy beta waves to a meditative state, or sleep state.

Last not least, relaxing is a pleasant experience and a tonic for body, mind and soul.

How may it help me?

By building in regular 'pillars of rest', your energy can be spread more easily throughout the day.

You avoid a 'boom and bust' situation, as you become more mindful of fluctuations in your energy levels, and you identify your need to rest.

You learn how to balance activity and rest, and how to avoid over or under-resting.

You are likely to feel mentally refreshed after ERR, and more able to tackle the next task.

It can be used to help you prepare for bed and sleep. It can help manage sleep problems.

You should experience less stress, and if you experience stress, the techniques can help you calm yourself again.

Rest is an essential part of recovery.

What form does it take?

You will be introduced to a variety of techniques, which are recorded on an audio CD for home practice.

Practices are practical and focused, starting from 10 minutes. That way, they can be built into your daily life without taking too much of your time.

Techniques vary and will encourage you to focus on your senses, your body or your breathing. Visualisation will also be introduced to help the mind create positive scenes and experiences.

Practices can be done lying down, or from sitting in a supportive chair, if you prefer. It is important that you are warm and comfortable, and that you ensure that you will remain undisturbed.

It might be helpful to discuss with your family / housemates how they can best support you to make time and space for ERR.

Reflective Questions:

Ask yourself:	Your answer:	Comments:
1. Which techniques have you identified to be useful for you?		
2. In what way can they be built into your daily routine?		
3. What might prevent you from using them regularly?		
4. How will you attempt to overcome these obstacles?		
5. Are there any practical changes you can make to ensure you practice? (i.e. quiet space, a regular time, a special chair or mat, support from other?)		

Let ERR be your 'prescription'

Sitting Relaxation with Desensitisation Techniques

The following practices are based on Yoga relaxation and pre-meditation practices. They have been widely used in Mindfulness and Stress Management programmes all over the world.

It is recommended that you first practice them at home. When you are more familiar with the practices, you can transfer them into every-day situations, such as when sitting in a waiting room, on a bus or train, or just after parking the car before your next activity.

Posture:

Sitting in a chair, head supported if possible, eyes closed.

Developing awareness of the sensation of touch:

- Soles of feet on floor – sense contact between feet and floor / weight / firmness
- Thighs against seat – sense contact / pressure / weight
- Back against chair – sense contact / pressure / weight
- Hands resting on lap – sense contact against legs / weight
- Sense texture of clothing / seat
- Face – skin in contact with air – sense temperature / movement or stillness through skin
- Eyelids – sense weight of eyelids over eyes / resting

Developing awareness of the sensation of sound:

- Detect sounds – close by / far away
- All sounds / noises in room / outside
- No need to analyse
- Listen
- Witness
- Listen to one sound, then another
- Listen to all sounds together
- Then bring awareness into the body – listen to the sound of your own gentle breathing

Duration 5 - 10 minutes

Breathing Practices for Everyday Life

'Right' breathing makes more efficient use of the lower part of the lungs (often called 'the abdominal or diaphragmatic breath')

If you watch a baby or a pet dog / cat sleep, you can watch its tummy move up and down as it breathes. We were all excellent abdominal breathers as babies, but often unlearn the 'right breathing' as we go through life. We might have formed a habit of holding tension in our tummies and push the breath into the upper chest.

It is important to re-learn abdominal breathing for the following reasons:

It increases the oxygen supply to the body, has a calming effect on the nervous system, and is needed to help us fall asleep. It can see us through challenging situations, by keeping a stress and / or anxiety response at bay.

You can also use this breath after stressful time, to calm the system down again.

Last not least, it helps us to be more assertive when we need it!

Posture:

To start with, it is advisable to develop your breathing practice lying on your back, with a flat pillow under your head.

If you experience lower back problems, bend your knees and support them from underneath with cushions or a blanket rolled up.

Let the arms rest by the sides and a little away from the body. Initially, you might wish to rest one palm across your tummy.

Later on, you can practice in many situations of daily life, like when standing in a queue, when stuck in traffic, or – once you are a pro - during an argument!

Breath Awareness

Before you work on the abdominal breath, it is important that you spend 5 – 10 minutes watching the natural spontaneous breath first. This alone will calm the breath and, subsequently, the nervous system down. You will discover this yourself, as your breath will become longer and less frequent, and you begin to feel more relaxed.

Long Out Breath

When we want to increase the efficiency of our breathing and the amount of oxygen available to us, we need to increase our out breath. This is because there can be a lot of unused oxygen in the lungs, and we want to increase efficient usage.

Further resources:

If you have mobile phone, apps on Relaxation techniques and Sounds of Nature are now available.

- Kabat-Zinn, Jon (1991) Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness
- Suraway, C., Roberts, J. And Silver, A,: The Effect of Mindfulness training on Mood and Measures of Fatigue, Activity and Quality of Life in Patients with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome on a Hospital Waiting List in Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy 2005, 33, 103-109
- Dr Maarten A. Immink (2013) Scientific Explorations into Satyananda Yoga Nidra
- Mandlik, Y.V. and co (2006) 'Effect of Yoga Nidra on EEG', Yoga Point
<http://www.yogapoint.com/info/research5.htm>
- For finding a Yoga teacher in your locality, visit the national website of registered teachers:
www.bwy.org.uk
- Or for a more gentle and mindful approach:
www.satyanandayogauk.com