

Relaxation Techniques

The ability to relax is a highly variable, individual, and fundamental human experience. Certainly, there are situations where such a skill is more or less available to an individual. Medical procedures are a classic example of both the challenge – and an opportunity – to such skill.

There is a great deal of information available to assist an individual with relaxation. Acknowledging the challenges inherent in our medical practice, we would like to support you as best as possible. This includes “creature comforts” related to physical comfort including physical and emotional support, balanced room temperature and external qualities (including music and appropriate verbal support). Your success with relaxation will be enhanced by your committed efforts.

There are four components to all relaxation techniques. Any individual component is enhanced in combination with other components.

1. **Deep breathing:** “the first and last thing we ever do in our lives” - and not so well in between! There are numerous deep breathing techniques available. The simplest and most effective is slow inhalation through the nose and slow exhalation through the mouth. Shallow chest breathing is highly ineffective and can lead to hyperventilation. Deep breathing into the abdomen is particularly desirable.
2. **Body Awareness:** there are numerous techniques with this effort including imaging healing breath moving throughout your body. “Waves of relaxation” imaged can be quite effective. Progressive relaxation techniques including tightening and then relaxing various muscles can help in this effort. Overall, becoming conscious of relaxation throughout your body is optimal.
3. **Directed thought:** internal and external techniques to focus your thoughts can be highly effective. “Internal” – might include a phrase (“I am relaxed”), (“I am calm”); a prayer (the Serenity Prayer); or some other positive affirmation. “External” – options include visually focusing on an item (including an attractive piece of art), another individual or reading. Listening to relaxing music or a relaxation tape can also prove quite effective and are available in this office.
4. **Visualization or Guided Imagery:** the simplest version of this is the “calming image” that you are in a safe place/at the beach/in a relaxed state. Variations include imagining yourself quite relaxed even during a procedure - and moving towards healing.

There are numerous resources to assist you in these efforts; we are happy to consider them with you. A particular tool that can prove beneficial is Prepare for Surgery, Heal Faster by Peggy Huddleston. This includes a book and tape to develop these skills prior to medical procedures.

Please do not hesitate to discuss these considerations with us further.

Respectfully,

The Professionals at Proctology Associates of Maine.

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