

Boice Counseling

Progressive Relaxation

If you have 10 minutes or less for break and have trouble with physical tension (tense muscles in neck, shoulders, jaw), this can be very helpful.

Technique Rationale/Why This Works: This involves tensing and relaxing muscles. By first tensing them you become aware of the stress that is present. By consciously relaxing them, you are teaching your body what the body feels like naturally. Since you have only 10 minutes for break, you can only do this with a few sets of muscles. Go for quality not quantity. Do these few muscles and do them well. The sense of relaxation naturally spreads through your body from these muscles. When you have more time, you will obviously want to relax more muscles.

Tensing means pushing the muscle to feel the tension (tense-count to two and relax-count to 5). If you are straining, shaking or in any pain, you are doing too much. Push enough to feel, not hurt. Tense each muscle once, then relax it. Spend several seconds paying attention to the relaxation. Enjoy it. Study it. Remember it. Tense and relax between two and four times per muscle.

Technique: Sit down, close your eyes and don't do anything for about 20 seconds. Remind yourself that there is no place you'd rather be right now. There is nothing more important than this relaxation.

- To tense the **neck**, be gentle, looking forward, move it slowly from the center to the right, looking over your right shoulder. Don't roll the neck. Move slowly back to the center and relax. After relaxing, move it to the left again, then slowly back to the center. Relax. Repeat the procedure. Please do it slowly.
- Move to the **shoulders**. Try to touch the shoulders to your ears; don't strain to do it, just move the shoulders in that direction. Do it slowly and let them go back to normal. Relax. Again try to touch your ears with your shoulders, slowly, return to normal and relax. Repeat the procedure. Roll your shoulders from front to back, slowly and relax. Repeat several times.
- Move your **jaw** to the left (bottom teeth to the left of the upper teeth) slowly and not too hard. Return to center and relax. Move bottom teeth to the right slowly and not too hard. Return to center and relax. Repeat the procedure. Clench your teeth gently and relax. Repeat the procedure.
- Move to your **eyes**. They should be closed if you feel comfortable enough to close them. With your eyes closed, look to the right. Don't strain! Move them back to the center and relax. Now look to the left slowly and without straining. Return to the center and relax. Now look up slowly and without straining, eyes still closed, and move them back to the center. Relax. Look down and return to center. Relax.

Take a few deep breaths, feel the relaxation spread-keep your eyes closed. Prepare to go back to work.

Note: Don't move too quickly after doing relaxation. Savor it, sit there for a minute or 30 seconds before doing anything. Carry the relaxation with you. Remember, you can return to the relaxation at any time. Some people like to tape record this exercise/technique. They can then use the tape at work during break.

If you need or want more help getting relaxed, give a call or e-mail me.

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