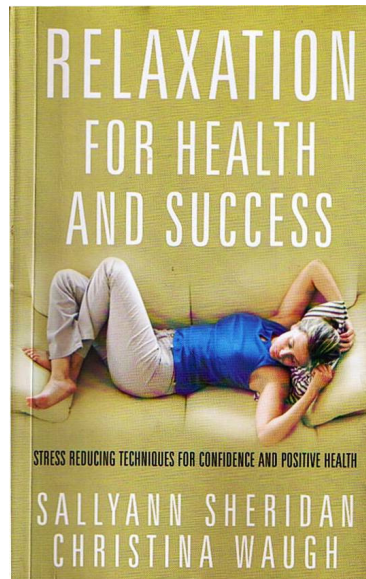


# Relaxation for Health and Success

## Stress Reducing Techniques for Confidence and Positive Health



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### ■ The Big Idea

Pressure affects everybody, regardless of what people do and how they go about it. It is vital to relax, and this book will show you how. You'll learn a series of simple relaxation techniques that can be used at home, at work – wherever you are. You will also learn how you can make your surroundings more relaxing, and how to prioritize the demands made on your time.

This book will help you discover the true benefits of relaxation – how to relieve your mind and body of the impact of internal and external pressures. You will discover there's a beneficial side to pressure and that by getting the balance right you can live a healthier, more successful life.

## ■ Why You Need This Book

Relaxation for Health and Success will help you work out both long- and short- term plans to de-stress your lifestyle through using various stress reduction techniques.

## ■ Understanding the Need to Relax

Stress is a serious issue which has major implications on health and indeed life itself. But many people have come to realize that in removing excessive pressure from their lives they have made exciting positive changes to their lifestyles. And the self-healing properties of the body mean that by making the necessary changes, you can improve your overall health, both in mind and body.

Relaxation is vital to this process.

There are many different ways in which you can respond positively to situations which cause you pressure. Here are some short-tem coping techniques:

**Asking for help.** Never be afraid to ask friends, neighbours, support groups, colleagues, and even strangers for help.

**Delegating.** You'll never get anywhere by trying to be everything to everyone. Enlist the help of friends, family, colleagues, whoever it takes.

**Talking.** Problems will not go away because you avoid talking about them. Talking through areas of your life that cause you concern will help bring them into perspective and lead the way to finding a solution.

**Taking a break.** Take a short quick break from that pile of chores or business reports. You'll return refreshed, less pressured and be far more productive.

**Reframing.** This simply means looking at the situation in a different way. It may help you understand why others think as they do.

**Removing yourself from the source of pressure.** Sometimes, it doesn't matter how reasonable you try to be, the best course of action is to remove yourself from the source of pressure, if only for a minute.

**Dropping the shoulders.** A lot of tension is held in your neck and shoulders. By deliberately shrugging and dropping your shoulders you can help relieve a lot of that tension.

**Thinking a positive thought.** Your mind can't think two things at once, so you can choose to oust any negative though with a positive (possibly funny) one.

**Standing back.** Sometimes we need to stand back (metaphorically) and look at the wider picture. Ask yourself 'In the great scheme of things does it really matter?' Invariably, the answer is no.

**Calming down.** You may feel that tranquillity is impossible to achieve when you feel angry, frustrated or afraid. But if you look upon these emotions as a perfectly natural part of life, it will be easier to overcome them.

## ■ Learning How to Relax

You will naturally find ways of developing your own relaxation skills. This may mean changing the way you've always done things.

If you're one of these people who always has to answer the phone – unplug it before you start relaxing. Consider joining a weekly relaxation class, stress management course, or one of the many one-day workshops run by colleges. Or how about visiting a retreat for a day or two to unwind completely? This needn't be costly. Some Buddhist monasteries run a programme of guided meditation retreats which are suitable for beginners.

Above all, make time for yourself.

### **TIPS TO HELP YOU RELAX**

- Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
- Make your setting tranquil.
- Keep your eyes lightly closed.
- Ensure you are warm.
- Breathe through your nose unless otherwise stated.
- Do not chew gum or anything else during relaxation.
- Do not imagine yourself engaging in anything physical.
- Get into the habit of listening to relaxing music.
- Wear loose clothing.
- Care enough about yourself to practice relaxation at least twice daily (three times would be even better) for at least 15 minutes each time.

## ■ **Developing Other Ways to Relax**

So what other methods can you use?

### **USING VISUALISATION**

Visualisation is such a powerful tool that it is being used increasingly in business and education. Writers and artists use it to aid creativity, health professionals use it to help treat anxiety and combat stress, and trainers use it to boost self-esteem and confidence. People from all walks of life now use visualisation both at home and at work – with great success.

### **TAKING UP YOGA**

Yoga literally means union, to bring together. Essentially, it is a way of life. This way of life would be extremely difficult in our modern Western culture, but we can use it to benefit the way we think, act and feel. By learning the correct way to breathe, stretch and relax, yoga dramatically improves our overall physical and mental health.

### **INTRODUCING YOURSELF TO AROMATHERAPY**

Aromatherapy is therapy (massage) using aroma (essential oils). Its aim is not to treat disease but to bring about a greater sense of physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being. This is achieved by inhaling essential oils or by massaging them into the skin.

### **DISCOVERING THE JOYS OF MASSAGE**

The beneficial effects of massage on our minds and bodies have been understood for many thousands of years. The stroking, kneading and rubbing movements help relax tense muscles. Massage improves circulation of the blood and has a positive impact on the nervous system, heart and other systems and organs of the body.

### **MAKING YOUR MIND WORK FOR YOU**

The way you think could well determine how long you live. Research shows that people who are optimistic and think positively live longer. They're also healthier than pessimists. It makes sense therefore to become an optimist – if you're not already. People can change – providing they have a good enough reason to do so.

When exploring all the possibilities, remember it's important to find methods which suit your individual needs best. Follow your intuition about the practitioner too. You may find you enjoy massage, but you can't seem to develop a rapport with the practitioner. Shop around, as it's important to find someone with whom you can be open and comfortable.

## ■ Finding Time to Relax

Balance is the key to so many aspects of our lives, and so it is with managing time. When we are under pressure it is easy to lose sight of what's really important; and conversely when we too little pressure we often procrastinate and achieve little. Everyone has to spend a certain amount of time eating and sleeping, and in many cases working too. But it is often the time outside of these areas which causes us the most problems.

### **FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

The size of your family and the number of friends you have will often determine how much time you can spend with them individually. It will also affect the amount of time you spend alone. If you're in a relationship, you must also spend time together; just the two of you. This is not an indulgence; it's an important step in keeping a relationship alive and healthy.

### **SPENDING TIME ALONE**

If you're surrounded by other people either at work or at home, you must make space for yourself. Spending time alone with your own thoughts, relaxing, making lists or writing up your journal is a necessary part of everyday life. Never believe this is a waste of time. Nor is sitting idly, watching the world go by. Or engaging in a pastime which you enjoy. It helps your overall contentment levels of and allows you to become more productive in all other areas of your life.

## ■ Making Your Surroundings More Relaxing

Our surroundings affect us and our ability to relax. Furniture, air quality and lights all play their part in creating a harmonious environment. The colour of our walls influences our moods and feelings, as does noise, smell and the music we listen to.

When working on making your surroundings more conducive to relaxation, here are some key points to remember:

- Work on reducing noise levels, improving air quality and maintaining good levels of humidity.
- Keep your environment well-ventilated and eliminate clutter.
- Use color thoughtfully – it can have an impact on your behavior, moods and ability to relax.
- Choose furniture for your long-term comfort as well as its practicality.
- Try to personalize some space for yourself at work.
- If you work from home, try to keep your work out of sight when you have finished for the day.

## ■ Relaxing Your Way to Sleep

Sleep is a completely natural function and one which we will spend up to one-third of our lives doing. People need differing amounts of sleep, however, so don't become over-concerned because you don't get a full eight hours every night or because your neighbor appears to get by on only two! You'll probably find your own sleep needs vary too. Some weeks, six hours a night may have you waking refreshed, while at other times you need more.

### **Checklist: What you can do in that short term**

- Wear ear plugs if noise is a problem.
- Reduce your intake of alcohol and caffeine.
- Open a bedroom window.
- Avoid mental stimulation last thing at night.
- Increase your intake of the essential amino acid tryptophan via foods such as chocolate, oats, bananas, durians, mangoes, dairy products, and red meat, or take supplements.
- Use calming essential oils.
- Plan for the following day.
- Relax regularly.
- Practice visualization at bedtime.
- Use up your energy.

### **Checklist: What you can do in the longer term**

- Practice relaxation at least twice daily (three times ideally) for at least 15 minutes each time.
- Take more daily exercise.
- Buy a better bed or mattress.
- Enjoy regular aromatherapy sessions or massage to relax your muscles.
- Enjoy a better, more nutritional diet.
- Take a good long hard look at your lifestyle – are you living how you really want to?

What was your answer to the last point? Are you living how you want and doing things you truly want? Be completely honest with yourself about this, as disturbed sleep is one of the most striking symptoms of stress. If the answer is no, then take a step towards changing it – today!

## ■ **Becoming a Relaxed Person**

Have you ever been in a room, office, shop or classroom when someone has rushed in, obviously irritated, dashed around snatching at things they wanted and raced out again? They probably left you feeling tense as if it was you who'd been rushing and irritated.

Some people, however, have the ability to make you feel relaxed and balanced. Their presence is calming, relaxing, soothing and you soon find yourself feeling less tense, less hurried and less agitated.

You too, can become more relaxed and have a calming influence on others by adopting the characteristics of someone who is calm and relaxed.

Try:

1. Talking more slowly
2. Keeping an even tone when talking
3. Not raising your voice too high
4. Moving more slowly
5. Avoiding sharp cutting movements with your hands
6. Not drumming your fingers
7. Eating more slowly
8. Chewing your food for longer
9. Holding your head level when conversing
10. Dropping your shoulders
11. Breathing slowly and rhythmically

These are just some of the characteristics of a calm person. One by one you can adopt them. And by acting calm, you will become calm.