

Relaxation/Mauri tau

Adapted from <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/>

This resource is for people wanting to use relaxation/mauri tau techniques to improve their wellbeing/whai oranga.

Relaxation allows physical and mental tension to be released. Two common types of relaxation techniques are described below. This includes breathing exercises and progressive muscle relaxation.

Breathing relaxation techniques

Breathing out gently releases tension in the chest and other muscles. It is more effective to breathe with your diaphragm (in your abdomen) rather than your chest muscles.

Abdominal breathing exercise



Sit comfortably in a chair or lie on your back on the floor and place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen/puku.

Take two or three large deep breaths—notice which hand moves first and which moves the most. Practice so your lower hand on your abdomen moves the most rather than your hand on your chest.

Another simple breathing exercise

You can do this simple breathing exercise in a few seconds no matter where you are. It can be done regularly throughout the day, particularly when feeling stressed/tāmitanga.

Take a deep, slow breath in and hold it for 5 seconds. Feel your abdomen expand as you do this. Breathe out slowly, to a count of five. Breathe in again, make every breath slow and steady and the same as the one before it and the one after it. As you breathe out, concentrate on expelling ALL the air in your lungs. Keep the out-breath going for as long as you can. Keep relaxed for a few seconds before you inhale again.

Progressive muscle relaxation

You can use progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) to relax each part of your body by tensing and then relaxing the muscles in that area. When we tense muscles and then relax them, they become more relaxed than they were to start with. Practice PMR by following the instructions below (record them and play them back if you like).

This video by Just a Thought takes you through some deep breathing to help you relax when you are feeling stressed/tāmitanga, visit <https://vimeo.com/400774901>

Or follow the directions below,



Sit in a comfortable chair (or lie on the floor or bed). Make sure your whole body is comfortably supported, including your arms, head, and feet. If you become aware of sounds, allow yourself to notice them and then let them leave your mind as soon as they enter.



Close your eyes. Feel the surface you are resting on support your whole body – your legs, your arms, your head. If you feel any tension, begin to let it go. Take two slow and deep breaths, in and out, and as you breathe out, let the tension begin to flow out.



Become aware of your head – notice how your forehead feels. Tense the muscles in your forehead for a few seconds and then let any tension go – feel your forehead become smooth and wide. Close your eyes tightly, then release them, relaxing the muscles around your eyes. Clench your jaw for a few seconds, then release it, letting the tension go from your mouth, cheeks, and jaw. Let your teeth part slightly as the tension goes.



Now focus on your neck and shoulders. Lift your shoulders and tense all the muscles in your neck and shoulders. Hold them tense for a few seconds and then release them. Let your neck lengthen as it relaxes, and your shoulders will gently lower down as they relax.



Be aware of your arms and your hands. Clench your fists and press your arms hard against the surface you are resting on for a few seconds. Now let your hands relax, and your arms sink down comfortably. They may feel heavy and limp.

Notice how your body feels as you begin to relax.



Be aware of your back – from your neck to your hips. Tense all these muscles for a few seconds, and then let them relax. Feel yourself sinking down into the chair



Next tense your feet and legs, pressing them for a few seconds against the surface you are resting on. Now release and let your hips, legs, and feet relax and roll outwards. Notice the feeling of relaxation taking over.



Notice your breathing – your abdomen gently rising and falling as you breathe. Let your next breath be a little deeper, a little slower...

Now, allow yourself to feel completely relaxed and heavy... Lie or sit still and concentrate on slow, rhythmic breathing...

When you want, take a deep breath and open your eyes. Wiggle your fingers and toes, breathe deeply, and stretch. Look around the room, staying relaxed but becoming more alert as you notice what you see, hear, and feel. Pause before gently rising.

Keeping going

Relaxation is a skill that takes practice. Try to practice different kinds of relaxation throughout the day – from full progressive muscle relaxation to brief breathing techniques.

Practising relaxation is important even if it does not seem to change anything straight away.

There are many different kinds of relaxation routines available online or as apps. Try different ones to find routines that are right for you.

Further support and information

If you are feeling stressed or experiencing negative feelings, remember, you don't have to do this alone. Seeking support from your whānau, friends, GP or health professional can help you get through. If you feel overwhelmed or just want to talk, call or text **1737** or check out the support options below.

Support

- › The Anxiety Helpline can guide you through relaxation and breathing techniques | **0800 269 4389**
- › Staying on Track is an e-therapy course that teaches practical strategies to cope with stress and disruption of day-to-day life | <https://www.justathought.co.nz>
- › Whakatau Mai – the Wellbeing Sessions are free, virtual, community events aimed at supporting wellbeing by helping you connect with others, learn and practice new skills, and start looking at things differently | <https://www.wellbeingssessions.nz/>
- › Auntie Dee is an online tool to help you work through problems and generate ideas and find solutions. Although aimed at young Pacific and Māori people aged 14 to 25 years, anyone can use the tool. | <https://www.auntiedee.co.nz/>

Information

- › HealthInfo offers more relaxation techniques and other helpful advice. | <https://www.healthinfo.org.nz/patientinfo/102470.pdf>
- › Mental Health Foundation offers information on stress and relaxation. | <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/resources/resource/switching-on-your-relaxation-response>
- › Health Navigator NZ offers information, advice, and resources on relaxation. | <https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/m/mindfulness/>
- › Healthline has a brief 15 minute video on yoga for anxiety and relaxation. | <https://www.healthline.com/health/natural-ways-to-reduce-anxiety#Mindful-Moves:-15-Minute-Yoga-Flow-for-Anxiety>
- › The Ministry of Health offers a directory of general wellbeing information and tools. | <https://www.health.govt.nz>
- › Te Hikuwai – Resources for wellbeing provides information on a range of topics from anxiety, depression, cannabis, and alcohol to sleep, stress, relaxation, and wellbeing. | <https://www.tepou.co.nz/tehikuwai>

Apps

- › Smiling Mind is a free app that helps with mindfulness, sleep, and stress. | <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/thrive-inside>
- › Mentemia is a free app that can help you monitor, manage, and improve your mental wellbeing, set daily goals, and track your progress. | <https://www.mentemia.com/nz/home>
- › Clearhead offer free 24/7 support and advice through your phone as well as resources, videos, and wellbeing plans. | <https://www.clearhead.org.nz/>
- › Melon is a free app with self-help tools to help manage emotional wellbeing. | <https://www.melonhealth.com> <https://www.clearhead.org.nz/>
- › Manaaki ora app by Te Rau Ora and the Centre for Māori Suicide Prevention is a free tool offering guidance and tips on how to support your wellbeing or someone else going through difficult times. | <https://terauora.com/news/self-help-wellbeing-app-launched-to-support-maori-experiencing-mental-distress/>
- › Headspace is a subscription app that provides guided meditation, reminders and trackers to help you relax and be mindful. | <https://www.headspace.com/>
- › There are many resources online with breathing exercises, meditation, and other ideas for self-care to help people relax.

Iti nei, iti nei

Take smalls steps to achieve your goals

