

9.3 Relaxation Techniques for Managing Stress

Stretching



Recap of last session

Last week we agreed that you would try:

Q! Did you get a chance to try this out? How did it go?

The goal this session is working towards:



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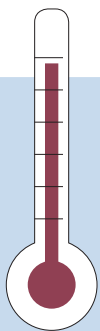
How can stretching help me?

- Simply stretching tired muscles can go a long way toward reducing tension and stress.
- Stretching exercises can be used almost anywhere, at any time, for as long as you want, so they can be an especially convenient relaxation technique.
- It is important to do stretching exercises that feel good to you. As we practice this today, please tell me if you experience any discomfort.



► **Stress or tension rating before exercise**

First, please rate your level of stress or tension right now before we practice the stretching exercise.



- 5** – Terribly tense
- 4** – Really tense
- 3** – Moderately tense
- 2** – Slightly tense
- 1** – Not at all tense



Talking point:

On a scale of **1 to 5**, how would you rate your stress or tension? _____

Stretching: Practice session

“Today, we will do a few stretching exercises that will help you relax. First, let’s start by standing up, or if you prefer, you may choose to do this exercise in your chair. Whatever is the most comfortable for you is all right.

Take a deep single breath, all the way down to the bottom of your stomach, [pause 2s] and slowly let it out. Feel the tension drain from your body. (pause) Take one more breath and hold it for a moment (pause 2s) and let it out slowly. With each breath you are becoming more and more relaxed.

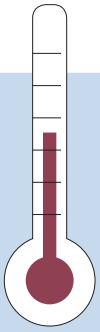
Now, gently reach your arms out to the sides, as though you were trying to touch the walls. Relax your shoulders and stretch yourself a little. Gently reach your arms out in front of you. Feel the muscles in your back and shoulders loosen up. Stretch out in front a little further. And now reach up as high as you can. Push up your arms towards the sky, as if you were trying to reach the sun.

Again, reach your arms out to the sides as though you were trying to touch the walls, as though you were trying to push the walls outward. Reach out in front of you. Feel your muscles in your back and shoulders become looser and less tense. Reach up toward the sky one more time. Reach as high as you can. Try to touch the sun. Lower your arms to your sides.

Now, roll your shoulders back. Feel the tension drain from your body. Roll your shoulders back again. One more time roll your shoulders back. Now roll them forward. Roll them forward again. One more time forward. Now shrug your shoulders, lifting them up and then pushing them down. Shrug your shoulders again. Shrug them one more time.

Now take in another deep and refreshing breath, and exhale all of the tension in your body. To complete this session, take one more breath... and exhale, letting go of any remaining tension... Are you feeling calmer and more relaxed now?”

► Stress or tension rating after exercise



- 5** – Terribly tense
- 4** – Really tense
- 3** – Moderately tense
- 2** – Slightly tense
- 1** – Not at all tense



Talking point:

On a scale of **1 to 5**, how would you rate your stress or tension now, after practicing the stretching exercise? _____

Summary and next steps

In this section we have talked about:

- Managing stress through stretching

FOR NEXT SESSION: Putting it into practice

▶ **Stretching**

Try to practice this every day and to use it in stressful situations. See if it helps. If possible, try it with your relative as part of a bedtime wind-down.

You can listen to this stretching relaxation exercise, and other GRACE relaxation exercises, online at: https://soundcloud.com/nidus_relaxation

Putting it into Practice

- ▶ **When will you have an opportunity to do this?**
- ▶ **What might get in the way?**
- ▶ **What might make it easier?**

Next session we will:

Q! Who will attend the next session?

- ▶ **Finally: Let's look over your goals and add in any actions you plan to make.**

