

Managing your Anxiety

If you are feeling anxious, this guide includes activities which can be used to help you feel calmer and more relaxed. It is a good idea to practice them when you are feeling calm.



If you see this photo, you will need someone to support you with the activity.

- 1 ~~~~~
- 2 ~~~~~
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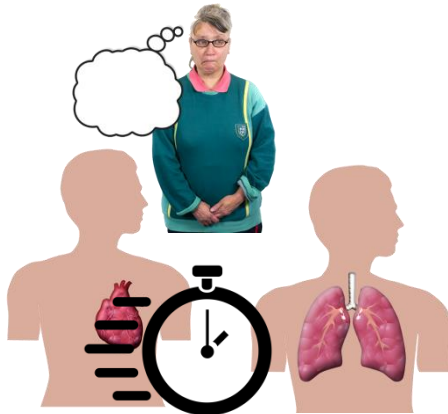


Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Further Resources and Acknowledgements

Breathing Exercises



When you are anxious your heart beats faster.

And you breathe faster.



This can make you feel even more anxious.



Changing the way you breathe can help you to calm down.



Practise these breathing exercises with your support worker when you are calm.

Belly Breathing (Lying down)

Lie down on your back.

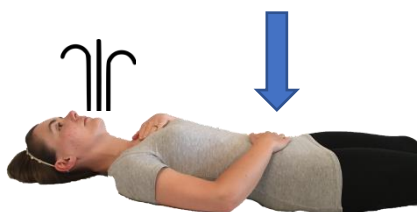


Put 1 hand on your belly and your other hand on your chest.



Breathe in deeply so that your belly fills up with air.

The hand on your belly will go up and the hand on your chest will stay still.



Breathe out slowly.

The hand on your belly will go down and the hand on your chest will stay still.



Repeat until you start to feel calmer.

Belly Breathing (Sitting)



Sit comfortably on a chair.

Put 1 hand on your belly and your other hand on your chest.



Breathe in deeply so that your belly fills up with air.

The hand on your belly will go up and the hand on your chest will stay still.



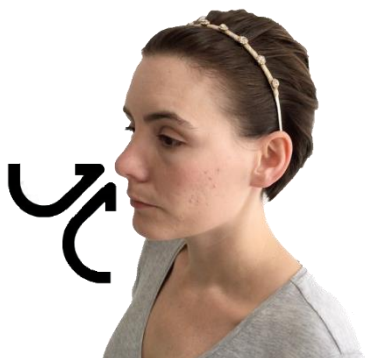
Breathe out slowly.

The hand on your belly will go down and the hand on your chest will stay still.



Repeat until you start to feel calmer.

Pursed Lip Breathing



Breathe in slowly through your nose.



Hold your breath while you count 1 – 2 – 3.



Breathe out slowly through your mouth as though you are gently blowing a candle out.



Repeat until you start to feel calmer.

Square Breathing



Sit with your back straight and your feet flat on the floor.



Breathe in slowly while you count 1 – 2 – 3 – 4.

Hold your breath while you count 1 – 2 – 3 – 4.



Breathe out slowly while you count 1 – 2 – 3 – 4.

Hold while you count 1 – 2 – 3 – 4.



Repeat until you start to feel calmer.

Grounding

This helps you **focus on the now** and feel calmer.

You can use your **senses** to help you focus on things around you (see next page).

When you have finished, say something positive about yourself.

For example:



I am a kind person



I make people happy






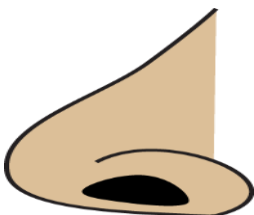

I have a loving family



I have a great smile

Grounding with your senses

Say them out loud....
or write them down

	5 things you can see	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
	4 things you can feel	1. 2. 3. 4.
	3 things you can hear	1. 2. 3.
	2 things you can smell	1. 2.
	1 thing you can taste	1.

Guided Visualisation



This helps you to imagine that you are somewhere else. It can be used to help you feel relaxed and calm.



You can play music that helps you feel calm or happy in the background.

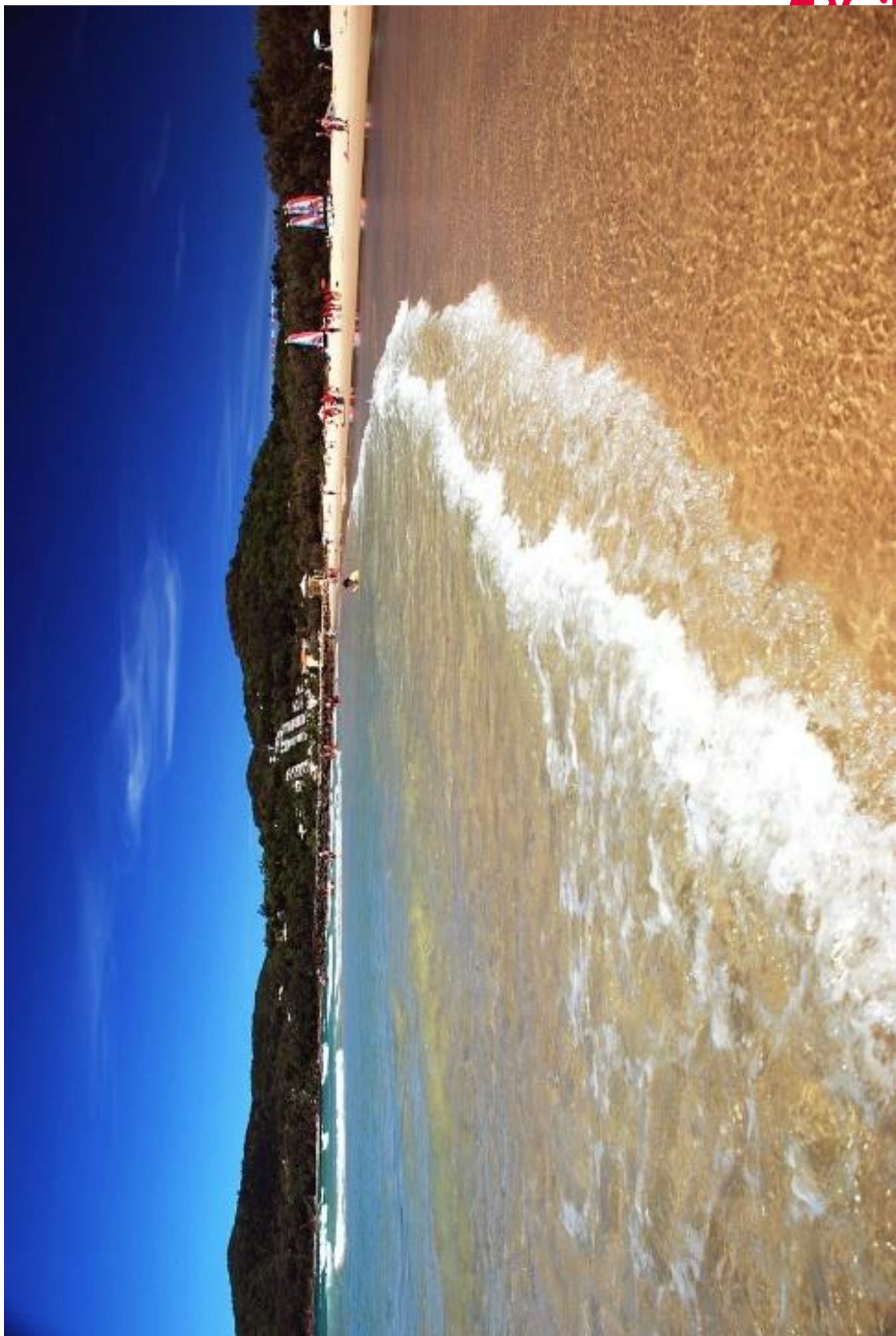


You will need someone to read the scripts for you. They should be read slowly and in a soft, calming voice.

Please feel free to change the scripts to suit the person who you are helping to relax. Use the photos to help the person imagine the place.

Before you begin, make sure you are in a comfortable position.

Breathe nice and slowly, focusing on each breath



Guided Visualisation – At the beach

Imagine you are at the beach.

You are sitting/lying in a comfortable position.

The rays of the sun are warm on your skin.

You can hear the sound of the seagulls and the waves gently splashing on the sand.

The waves roll in and out, in and out. Each wave makes you feel more relaxed.

You can see the clear blue sky and the sparkling water.

You can feel the sand in your toes and a gentle breeze blowing on your skin.

You can smell the sea air.

You slowly breathe in and out and with each breath, you feel more relaxed.

You feel safe and calm.



Guided Visualisation – At the park

Imagine you are at the park.

You are sitting/lying in a comfortable position.

The rays of the sun are warm on your skin.

You can hear the sound of children playing in the distance and the birds singing in the trees.

Each bird song makes you feel more relaxed.

You can see the blue sky and the fluffy clouds.

You can smell the freshly cut grass and feel it tickling your toes.

You can feel a gentle breeze blowing on your skin.

You slowly breathe in and out and with each breath, you feel more relaxed.

You feel safe and calm.

Insert Photo Here

Guided Visualisation – At your safe place

Imagine you are at (your safe place)

You are sitting/lying in a comfortable position.

You feel warm and safe.

You can hear (sounds that make you feel safe e.g. Dad's voice, music)

You can see (things that make you feel safe e.g. pictures, pets, family)

You can smell (smells that make you feel safe e.g. washing powder, Mum's perfume)

You can feel (things that make you feel safe e.g. favourite blanket, soft toy)

You slowly breathe in and out and with each breath, you feel more relaxed.

You feel safe and calm.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This is an activity that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle.



This activity can make you feel relaxed straight away, but it is best to practice often.








If you have any pain or injuries, you can skip that area of your body.



You will need someone to read out the instructions for you. They should be read slowly and in a soft, calming voice.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

	<p>Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position.</p> <p>Shut your eyes if you are comfortable doing so.</p>
	<p>Take a deep breath and feel your lungs up with air.</p> <p>Hold your breath for a few seconds and then breathe out slowly.</p> <div data-bbox="742 1176 1109 1344">  <p>Repeat</p> </div>
	<p>Now move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of your foot.</p> <p>Hold it and let go.</p> <div data-bbox="742 1736 1109 1904">  <p>Repeat</p> </div>

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Next, begin to focus on your lower legs. Tense the muscles in your calves.

Hold it and let go.

Remember to continue taking slow, deep breaths.



Repeat



Next, tense the muscles in your upper legs and pelvis. You can do this by squeezing your thighs together.

Hold it and let go.



Repeat

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Begin to tense your stomach and chest. You can do this by sucking your stomach in.

Hold it and let go. Allow your body to go floppy.



Repeat



Breathe in slowly and hold it.

Breathe out slowly.



Repeat



Tense the muscles in your back by shrugging your shoulders. Hold them as tightly as you can without straining.

Hold it and let go. Notice how different your body feels when you let it relax.



Repeat

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Tense your arms all the way from your hands to your shoulders. Make a fist and squeeze all the way up your arm.

Hold it and let go.



Repeat



Tense your face by screwing it up or making a silly face.

Hold it and let go.



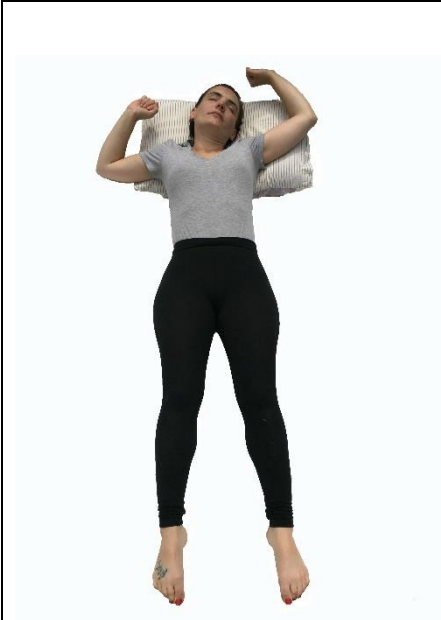
Repeat



Finally, tense your whole body – your feet, legs, stomach, chest, shoulders, arms, hands and face. Tense as hard as you can without straining and hold it.

Now relax and let your whole body go floppy. Enjoy the feeling of relaxation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



When you are ready, begin to wake your body up by wiggling your fingers and your toes. Slowly move your arms and legs and have a big stretch.

When you are ready, open your eyes and sit or stand up. Give yourself some time to enjoy the feeling of relaxation before you start doing another activity.

Further Resources

Feeling Down: Looking after my Mental Health which is available to download [here](#). This includes an activity sheet called **My Staying Healthy Plan**. You can include the activities in this guide in your plan. You will also find lots of helpful information such as where you can get more help and people you can contact.

Videos to help you with Progressive Muscle Relaxation

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=progressive+muscle+relaxation

Videos to help you with square breathing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFdZXwE6fRE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOL3isokmY4>

Easy read advice about Coronavirus

<https://www.essexice.co.uk/advice-about-coronavirus/>

Acknowledgements

Breathing exercises adapted from

<https://www.anxieties.com/88/flying-step3>

Development of this guide was informed by *Relaxation for People with Disabilities* (Scope 2015) available online at

https://www.scopeaust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/relaxation_and_disability.pdf



This guide has been developed in collaboration with Inclusive Communication Essex (ICE).

