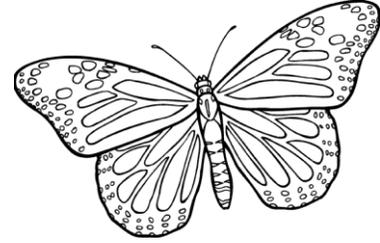


Simple Stress Reduction Ideas

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The Butterfly (very good for easing shoulder and neck stress, headache)

- Sit up straight. Clasp your hands behind your neck, lacing your fingers. Inhale slowly through your nose, at the same time pulling your elbows back as far as you can, like the wings of a butterfly opening to the sun.
- Bend slowly forward, exhaling gently through your nose, bending your elbows in, bringing your chin to your chest. You are a butterfly with folded wings.
- Inhale again, pulling your elbows open and back until your butterfly wings are fully spread.
- Repeat 7 times, breathing slowly through your nose, expanding and contracting your chest with each inhalation and exhalation.

Heaviness and Warmth

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes and imagine that your feet and legs are getting heavier and heavier and warmer and warmer, almost as if your bones were made of stone. Repeat softly to yourself, “My feet and legs heavy and warm, heavy and warm.” Now, imagine the whole central part of your body becoming warm, and repeat softly to yourself, “Warm and relaxed, warm and relaxed” as this lovely feeling of warmth and heaviness spreads throughout your body. Then say to yourself “Every easy breath relaxes me deeper.”

Slow Down

We often rev up our nervous systems by running around trying to get everything done, or trying to do three things at once. This fatigues the body and mind. This simple and powerful technique involves simply slowing down our activities, allowing ourselves to do one thing at a time, reaching for the phone a little more slowly, walking a little more slowly and mindfully, writing that note a little more slowly, and allowing the slowness and peace to massage our nervous systems. Slowing down feels foreign at first but your body/mind will thank you.

Breathe Your Body Away

Gently focus your attention on your feet and legs, becoming aware of all sensations in your feet and legs. Inhale a long, slow, easy breath, and as you do, breathe in all the sensations from your feet and legs. As you exhale, breathe out all these sensations and imagine that you are erasing this part of your body. Feel how light and free you are. And with your next long easy inhale, breathe in all the parts of your body up to your neck, and as you exhale, breathe it all away... and beginning with your fingers, breathe in your fingers, hands, wrists, and arms and exhale them away. Now your neck and head, breathe them in and exhale them away. And take one more long slow breath in, and as you exhale slowly, erase any little parts of your body that still remain. Just sit quietly for a moment and enjoy feeling so relaxed.