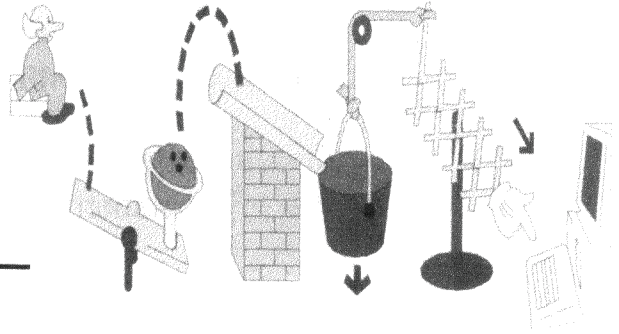


BUILDING A RELAXATION MACHINE



In a Nutshell

Participants are taught how to use common objects to help them perform a simple relaxation exercise.

Time

5-10 minutes.

What You'll Need

An assortment of four or five common objects that can be used to help people relax. Suggested: a small pillow, a piece of paper, a working clock that has a second hand, a pencil, a magazine photo of a tropical scene, and a red push-pin.

What to Do

Show the participants some of the objects that you've brought with you, and engage the group in a discussion about how these items might be used to promote relaxation. For example:

Pencil. Can be used as an aid in an eye-movement exercise. Can also be used for drawing or scribbling.

Magazine clipping of tropical scene. Can be used to launch a visualization exercise.

Red push-pin. Placed inconspicuously on the wall, this can be used as a “focus point” for imagery or breathing exercises.

Discussion Questions

1. What objects, materials, and supplies are on hand in your work setting that could be used for relaxation?
2. What objects, materials, and supplies could be added to your work setting to promote relaxation?

If You Have More Time

Here are some other objects that can be used to help people relax:

Small pillow. Can be placed on one's chair in the small of the back to help attain a more relaxed posture. Can also be placed on the floor to support the head, back, or knees during a breathing or visualization exercise.

Blank piece of paper. Can be used to launch a visualization exercise, for drawing or scribbling, or

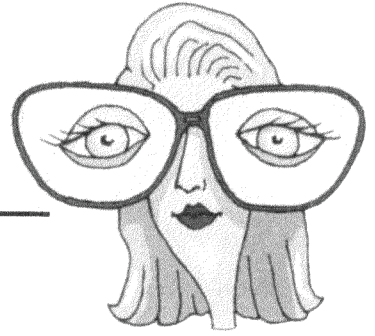
as an aid in a simple meditation exercise.

Clock with second hand. Can be used to time a relaxation exercise. Focusing on one full cycle of the second hand can also serve as a simple form of meditation.

Personal Touch

You can easily use all of the methods described in this chapter for your own stress management.

DANCING WITH YOUR EYES



In a Nutshell

Participants practice moving their eyes in a pattern that produces a relaxation response.

Time

5 minutes.

What You'll Need

No special materials are necessary.

What to Do

Explain to participants that eye movement can be used to affect mood. Then, have participants sit in a relaxed position, and instruct them as follows:

Slowly and easily, move your eyes upward toward the ceiling, as far as you can, and then downward toward the floor, as far as you can. Pause briefly at each extreme. Repeat this movement, slowly and smoothly and easily, ten times. When you're done, bring your eyes to the center position,

looking straight ahead.... Now, slowly and easily, move your eyes all the way to your left, then all the way to your right. Repeat this movement, slowly and smoothly and easily, ten times, again pausing briefly at each extreme..... When you're done, once again bring your eyes center, and look straight ahead. Now, slowly and easily, move your eyes to the extreme upper-left corner of your field of vision, then in a straight line toward the lower-right corner of your field of vision, again pausing briefly at each extreme. Continue to move back and forth along this diagonal ten times.... Now repeat this movement along the other diagonal ten times, moving slowly and easily from the upper-right corner of your field of vision to the lower-left corner of your field of vision. Pause briefly at each extreme. Always move slowly and smoothly and easily, and remember to keep breathing.

Now, slowly and easily, move your eyes toward the ceiling again, and begin moving your eyes in a slow circle, clockwise, first down toward your right, then down toward the floor, then up toward your left, and up again toward the ceiling. Keep the movement slow and smooth and steady, and remember to keep breathing.... Now continue this movement until you've completed ten clockwise circles, and then bring your eyes back to the center position.... Finally, bring your eyes toward the ceiling once more. Now, slowly and easily, begin moving your eyes in a counterclockwise circle, first down to your left, then down toward the floor, then up to your right, then up toward the ceiling....

Continue this movement until you've completed ten counterclockwise circles.... When you're done, move your eyes back to center, and look straight ahead....

Conclude the activity by asking a few participants to describe how they felt during the exercise and to say how they feel now.

Discussion Questions

1. Did you feel any relaxation effect?
2. Do you think that eye movement can produce a relaxation effect? Why or why not?
3. How might you incorporate an eye-movement exercise into your daily routine?

Personal Touch

You can practice this technique almost any time to help you relieve your own stress. If it helps, put the text on tape and play it when you need it.