**Stress and Anxiety Management Techniques**

The following handout provides instructions and/or resources on 5 techniques to utilize in combating and reducing stress and anxiety. Each of these can be used on a daily basis and supplement psychotherapy to increase calm, relaxation and overall psychological well-being. The ideal is for the techniques to be practiced and learned, allowing a multi-layered and tailored approach to be applied to both general and specific situations where stress and anxiety can be problematic.

**Prescribed Breathing**

When we are relaxed or sleeping there is a natural rhythm 'to our breathing. The stomach slightly protrudes, the rib cage expands, and the shoulders lift slightly at the end of the cycle, When under stress, the natural rhythm of breathing is disturbed. We may hyperventilate by breathing rapidly and shallowly, or we may breathe too slowly and create hypoxia or hypoventilation.

***Steps in Prescribed Breathing***

1. Sit comfortably, but erectly with feet firmly planted on the floor just slightly in front of your knees, the weight of the head and neck resting firmly on the spinal column, hands resting on the lap, eyes closed, and garments loosened.
2. Inhale for three (3) seconds; hold fortwelve (12) seconds; and exhale for six (6) seconds. Repeat the procedure five times for a total of six rounds.
3. At the end of the sixth cycle, exhale explosively and sit quietly for a minute, allowing your breathing to return to normal.

Practice this exercise frequently until you can visualize the resulting relaxation before you begin. The more you practice the exercise, the better the results. Prescribed Breathing is an emergency technique to help with highly stressful situations such as confronting your boss or giving a public address.

**Deep Muscle Relaxation**

Deep muscle relaxation is incompatible with anxiety. Muscle relaxation training consists of learning to tense and release various muscle groups throughout the body. An essential part of learning how to relax involves learning to pay close attention to the feelings of both tension and relaxation in your body. First tensing muscles and then relaxing them causes the muscle fibers to spread out *more* and the resulting relaxation to be more profound.

***Steps in Inducing Deep Muscle Relaxation***

1. Extend your arms in front of you and clinch your fists. For this and each consecutive muscle group, tense for seven seconds and then rest the muscles for 20-30 seconds before moving on to the next muscle group.
2. Extend your arms in front of you and point your fingers toward the ceiling as though you were pushing the wall.
3. Touch your fingers to your shoulders so as to tense your biceps.
4. Shut your eyes tightly so as to tense the muscles around your eyes, your forehead, and your temples (skip this exercise if you are wearing contact lenses).
5. Push your tongue against the roof of your mouth, clinch your molar teeth together, and pull the corners of your lips around as though trying to touch your ears.
6. Pull your chin down one inch from the sternum (breast. bone) and at the same time try to pull your chin further toward the sternum and backwards toward your back. This sets up an antagonistic muscle reaction and causes the head to tremor.
7. Take a deep breath and hunch your shoulders up towards your ears.
8. Pull your shoulders back as though trying to touch them together in the back.
9. Suck your stomach in as though trying to touch your backbone.
10. Push your rear-end into the chair so as to tense your buttocks muscles.
11. Extend your legs in front of you and lift your heels six inches off the floor so as to tense your thigh muscles.
12. With your legs extended and your heels resting on the floor, point your toes towards your knees so as to tense your calf muscles.
13. With your legs extended and your heels resting on the floor, curl your toes toward the arches (tense for three seconds only as these muscles easily cramp).
14. Review the condition of each muscle group and visualize then becoming more relaxed. In your mind see the muscle fibers becoming looser & longer—stretching out like wet spaghetti. You may notice that your palms are becoming warmer, that your upper torso is becoming heavier. These effects are evidences of deep relaxation. Sit quietly for several moments.

**Meditation**

Deepak Chopra Defines Meditation – Everyone thinks that the purpose of meditation is to handle stress, to tune out, to get away from it all. While that's partially true, the real purpose of meditation is actually to tune in, not to get away from it all, but to get in touch with it all. Not to just de-stress, but to find that peace within, the peace that spiritual traditions talk about that passes all understanding. So, meditation is a way to get in the space between your thoughts. You have a thought here, a thought here, and there's little space between every thought.

**Helpful Resources**

<http://www.mindfulmuscle.com/5-top-guided-meditations/>

This website offers a nice variety of 6 guided meditations including ones oriented for sleep, anxiety, and mindfulness. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn is a leader in meditation practices and is featured in the final option.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3OJOSqyBsE>

This is a guided meditation specific for OCD. It is designed to be used during an OCD spike. It is best to review first and get comfortable with the offering before applying it during an OCD spike.

**Yoga**

Traditionally yoga was practiced and developed to open your body and clear your mind. The word yoga in its literal and deepest translation means to unite. Postures are the helpmate or a stepping-stone to that bigger picture of being connected to a higher source. More often than not we will practice yoga just for its physical benefits of having toned muscles, flexibility, and mental clarity. However, a deep practice of yoga can bring about a deeper sense of who we are and fill any gap in our lives giving you a true sense of completeness.

**Helpful Resources**

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

This website offers an introductory yoga practice for beginners.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTfIq24B5QE>

This provides a brief yoga as daily practice.

**Guided Imagery**

Guided imagery is a gentle but powerful technique that focuses and directs the imagination. Guided imagery involves all of the senses, and almost anyone can do this. Neither is it strictly a "mental" activity it involves the whole body, the emotions and all the senses, and it is precisely this body-based focus that makes for its powerful impact.

**Helpful Resources**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vO1wPAmiMQ>

The following is a guided imagery uses meditation and visualization to reduce stress and anxiety.

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

The following is a guided imagery and meditation and visualization to reduce depression.