



HEALTH ASSOCIATES\*

Your Workplace Wellness & EAP Partner

Brought to you by [H & H Health Associates](#)

May 2026



## Relaxation Methods That Really Work

Everyone has stress and feels its effects. Short-term effects of stress include headaches, shallow breathing, trouble sleeping, anxiety, and upset stomach. Long-term (chronic) stress can increase your risk for heart disease, back pain, depression, constant muscle aches and pains, and a weak immune system.

Chronic stress can affect your emotions and behavior. It makes you grouchy, impatient, less enthusiastic about your job, and depressed.

To keep stress at a minimum and reduce its effects on your life, research shows it is helpful to find and practice healthy ways to manage it. Try these methods to see what works best for you.

### Take a breath

Start by sitting up straight. Breathe in so your rib cage expands and then breathe out slowly. Breathing in this way relaxes muscles. This helps to reduce tension. It also reduces the likelihood of muscle and back pain.

You can focus on a word, a mantra, or even your breath by focusing on your nostrils. Feel the breath coming in and going out. What you're trying to do is put the focus on something other than your problems. Do this for 10 to 20 minutes, twice a day.

### Relax slowly

Sit or lie down, if you can, and close your eyes. Starting at your head, tense your face by clenching your teeth and furrowing your brow. Hold the tension for 5 seconds, then release it.

Next, tense your shoulders by bringing them up to your ears. Hold for 5 seconds, then release. Tense your arm muscles and hold for 5 seconds, then release. Continue to tighten and release each group of muscles in your body until you reach your toes. Focus on the warmth and heaviness of your body as you relax. Breathe gently for a few moments and then open your eyes.

### **Visualize**

Sit or lie down and close your eyes. For 5 to 10 minutes, imagine you're in a place you love. This may be the beach, the mountains, or the house you grew up in. Breathe slowly and deeply as you imagine what you see, feel, hear, taste, and smell in your special place.

### **Be patient**

Be patient with yourself and with this process. It's important to find a method that works for you on an ongoing basis, not just when your life is out of control. Doing this regularly can give you a place of calm to return to when the going gets rough.