

GUIDE

My Gentle Practice Guide

Gentle practices to calm your body and mind: breathing, a three-minute pause, muscle relaxation and a fifteen-minute relaxation.

INSIDE

01 Before you begin

02 A gentle breathing practice

03 A three-minute mindful pause

04 A gentle muscle-relaxation practice

05 A fifteen-minute relaxation

Before you begin

Read this before any breathing, mindfulness or imagery practice.

PRACTISE ONLY WHEN SAFE

Not while driving, cycling, operating machinery or anywhere reduced attention could be unsafe. Keep breathing gentle; no breath holds or forced deep breaths. Stop if dizzy, breathless or distressed, and return to normal breathing.

MENTAL-HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

With trauma/dissociation, ask your care team before self-guided imagery/audio. With psychosis/schizophrenia or epilepsy, seek medical advice before hypnosis/imagery recordings. Stop any practice that increases distress; open eyes and orient to the room.

WHEN TO GET HELP

Severe depression or self-harm thoughts need mental-health care; emergency help if unable to stay safe. Blood/black stool, unexplained weight loss, anaemia, night-waking symptoms or new persistent bowel changes need assessment.

WHAT THESE PRACTICES CAN DO

The book’s relaxation routine is expert-advice self-help, not a validated hypnotherapy programme or full CBT. Belching/rumination require diagnosis; home breathing is not the same as therapist biofeedback. Keep other care in place.

What feels safe for me / questions for my care team

A gentle breathing practice

Read slowly, with a pause between steps.

Settle

Sit supported somewhere safe. Keep eyes open if you prefer. Notice the chair and your feet. There is no need to take a large breath.

Breathe comfortably

Let breathing stay quiet and gentle. If comfortable, allow an easy in-breath and a slightly longer out-breath. About four seconds in and six out is optional, not a target. No holding or forcing.

Return

If dizzy, short of breath or distressed, stop the exercise and breathe normally. Look around the room. End with your own comfortable rhythm.

These practices are self-help. Read the safety page before you start.

A three-minute mindful pause

Read slowly, with a pause between steps.

Minute 1 · Notice

Notice thoughts, feelings and sensations without needing to change them. If internal focus feels unhelpful, look at a steady object or notice sounds in the room.

Minute 2 · Choose an anchor

If comfortable, notice normal breathing. Otherwise choose contact with the chair, your feet or sounds. Whenever attention wanders, return gently.

Minute 3 · Widen

Widen attention to your whole body and the room. Move fingers and toes, look around and choose a manageable next step.

These practices are self-help. Read the safety page before you start.

A gentle muscle-relaxation practice

Read slowly, with a pause between steps.

Settle · about 1 minute

Sit supported. Choose to skip any tense or painful area. Continue normal breathing throughout.

Hands and arms · about 2 minutes

If comfortable, gently tense for about five seconds, then release for about fifteen. Repeat only if comfortable. Notice the change without needing a special sensation.

Face, neck and shoulders · about 2 minutes

Use only a gentle movement that is comfortable. Release; do not force a stretch.

Chest, back and belly · about 2 minutes

Keep breathing normally. Skip any sore belly or uncomfortable area; simply rest instead.

Legs and feet · about 2 minutes

A gentle squeeze, then let go if comfortable. No need to complete every muscle.

Rest · about 1 minute

Allow ordinary breathing. Look around and return in your own time.

These practices are self-help. Read the safety page before you start.

A fifteen-minute relaxation

Seven stages. Imagery is optional.

0–2 · Settle

A supported position in a safe place; eyes open is allowed. Normal, gentle breathing.

2–5 · Relax the body

Move attention through comfortable areas. Skip painful or distressing internal focus.

5–7 · A place of ease

Picture a safe place, such as a staircase, or focus on something in the room instead. No image is required.

7–9 · Belly warmth

Optional comfortable imagery only. Do not promise to heal the lining or change bacteria.

9–12 · Symptom imagery

You could picture a dial, a balloon or a steady stream. Choose or skip imagery; relief is not guaranteed.

12–13 · Supportive words

Use a kind neutral phrase, not a claim that treatment is unnecessary.

13–15 · Return

Notice the room, move gently and return to ordinary activity when fully alert.