

# Relaxation Cards

Relaxation exercises are techniques designed to help the body and mind release tension and return to a calmer state. These exercises work by activating the body's parasympathetic nervous system—often called the “rest and digest” system—which helps lower heart rate, reduce muscle tension, and slow down rapid breathing.

Making relaxation a daily habit can be a powerful tool to reduce stress and anxiety. When you practice relaxation techniques every day, you can “train your brain” so that it is easier to achieve a state of relaxation even in times of stress or anxiety. It is a simple and straight-forward way to learn emotional regulation.

The Relaxation Cards are designed to be carried with you and used once a day to develop a “habit of relaxation.” The directions are simple:

- Sit in a comfortable chair.
- Trace your finger around the outline of the animal on the card slowly breathing in and out. Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.
- Hold for 2 seconds.
- Exhale through your mouth for 6 seconds.
- Do this for about five minutes.

You may also want to listen to relaxing music as you trace your finger around the animal and practice deep breathing. Use the QR code on each card to listen to relaxing music on your phone.

