

## TIPS TO BEGIN & MAINTAIN RELAXATION SKILLS

- Incorporate relaxation as part of your routine. For instance you may want to begin by setting aside a half-hour three nights a week before you go to bed to practice relaxation and then build up to a half-hour every night. Start with a goal that is manageable for you.
- Avoid interruptions. You should start practicing the procedures with your eyes closed. Choose a time of day and place where you know you will not be interrupted. You may wish to ask people you live with not to disturb you, turn the television off, take the phone off the hook, etc.
- Ensure you are comfortable. Especially in the early stages, it is important to listen to the tape whilst lying down or sitting comfortably in a chair. Your legs should be uncrossed and your hands resting on your lap, by your sides or on the arms of the chair. You should loosen any tight clothing and ensure that you are not too hot or too cold. If you are hungry or have just eaten you may find relaxation more difficult.
- Relaxation is a skill to be learnt. It is not often something that comes naturally. Do not worry about how well you are doing or if you are doing it wrong. Try not to tell yourself to "relax" or "calm down". Be patient with yourself and just have a go. Persevere if you find it difficult to begin with. Like all skills, you will also gain more benefit from regular practice. In time it will feel more natural.
- Breathe correctly. Correct breathing is essential to effective relaxation. You should breathe through your nose and become aware of the fact that you relax as you breathe out. Do not hold your breath, as this will disrupt your relaxation. As you breathe in through your nose your stomach should move outwards and your chest should be still. As you breathe out your stomach should return to normal.
- Move unhurriedly. As you do the exercises do them slowly, in a smooth action rather than in a hurried jerky fashion. Once completed, wait a few moments before gently getting up.