



Stress Management

Pulmonary Rehabilitation Educational Booklet

壓力的處理

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Hospital Authority

Coordinating Committee-Grade in Occupational Therapy

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Foreword

This stress management educational booklet is compiled by Hong Kong Occupational Therapists. It provides you with information about the impacts of stress on health, and practical strategies on stress management with various techniques of life.

Importance of stress management

Patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases (COPD) have been facing and coping with their chronic debilitating condition for years. The coexistence of difficulty in breathing and progressive decrease in functioning is the cause of stress to them.

Continuous exposure to stress increases the risks of worsening dyspnoea, insomnia, high blood pressure and gastrointestinal discomforts. Therefore, effective stress management and relaxation can help to ease these symptoms of stress and breathlessness in patients with COPD.

Sources of stress

Various aspects in our daily living may create stress, such as from:



- 1) Work
- 2) The surrounding environment (physical & social)
- 3) The personality of the individual
- 4) Financial burden and
- 5) Responsibilities from home management

Psycho-physiological responses when you are under stress

Physiological impacts:

- Increase of heart rate
- Increase of sweating
- Gastrointestinal discomforts



Psychological impacts:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Decrease of appetite

Stress management strategies

1) Identify your source of stress

Facing your problems directly is the most effective way of finding the solutions.

2) Find someone to share your problems

Find someone who genuinely cares about you whom you can comfortably express your worries; or see a professional for advice.

3) Plan ahead

Plan your daily schedule appropriately to maintain balance between activity and rest.

4) Make leisure pursuit a habit

Your life is not just work or household chores. Having fun enhances well-being in your life.

5) Allow time for a good rest

If you are under a high level of stress, you need a good rest. The rest at least allows you to escape away from them temporarily. Going for a short walk, listening to music or a nap may help.

6) Relaxation practice

Practice of relaxation techniques helps you to adjust to the tension. They aim to ease your muscle tension and mental stress.

Preparation before Relaxation practice

1) Make yourself comfortable e.g. lying on the bed or couch, and avoid wearing tight clothing

2) You also need a quiet environment with soft lighting and comfortable room temperature.

* Relaxation practice can come in several ways. Some of them are listed as below, and you can consult an Occupational Therapist or other related professionals for relaxation advice.

Mind and body relaxation techniques

(1) Autogenic relaxation through controlled breathing

Try to focus on controlled and relaxed breathing, and use your body awareness to reduce stress.

1) Inhale through your nose slowly, and try to imagine that there's a warm breeze going up from your toes.



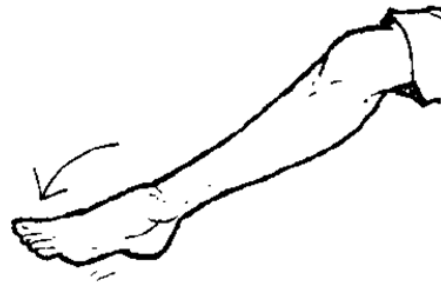
2) Then exhale from your mouth slowly, and remind yourself to relax. Imagine that your stress and anxiety come out together with the exhalation.



(2) Progressive muscle relaxation

In this technique, you focus on the interplay of tension and relaxation of each muscle group. This helps you to experience be aware of the difference between muscle tension and relaxation.

Foot and leg



Point your toes downwards to the floor then relax.



Tighten your calf muscle by pulling your toes towards yourself and relax.



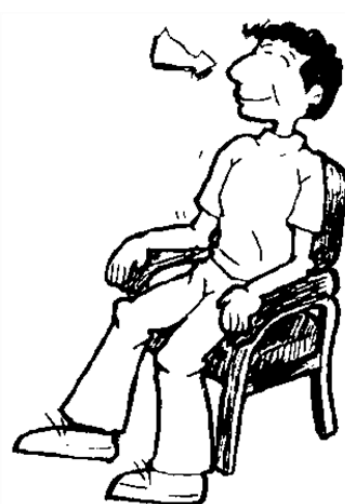
Curl your toes downward and relax.

Abdomen



Tuck your stomach in and relax.

Back



Expand your chest with your shoulders pulling backward and relax.

Shoulders



Raise your shoulders up to your ears and relax.

Hands



Clench your fist and relax.

Arms



Tighten your biceps by drawing your forearm up towards your shoulder and relax.

Neck



Head up and go backward until you feel the tension of your neck and relax.



Head down with your chin touching your chest and relax.

Eyes

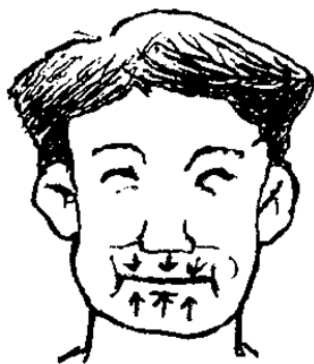


Raise your eyebrows as far as you can and relax



Close your eyelids tightly and relax

Mouth



Seal your lips tight and relax



Open your mouth wide enough to stretch your jaws and relax

* When you practice progressive muscle relaxation, don't forget exhale slowly when you relax your muscles. It makes relaxation more effective.

(3) Visualization Technique

Many people may have the experience of daydreaming. Visual imagery relaxation is like a form of structured daydreaming, which leads us to relax our mind.

In this technique, you take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation. Try to use as many senses as you can, including smells, sights, sound and touches. Your "dream" may be the warmth of the sun, the feel of the grains of sand or the smell of salt water, or situations that soothe you. When our brain receives comforting visual imagery messages, it will bring us a state of relaxation including slowing of heart rate, breathing rate and reduction of muscle tension.



(4) Mindfulness

Mindfulness is based on being aware of the present in a non-judgmental way. By developing a more mindful attention towards yourself and everyday life, mindfulness helps you better manage your stress and anxiety. Mindfulness-based strategies include:

1) Breathing

- Focus on simply breathing in and out slowly. Breathing practice could help you deal with negative thoughts due to stress.

2) Body scanning

- A body scan is to bring awareness to different body parts. Body scanning helps you notice discomforts in your body and relax your body parts.

3) Meditation

- Sit at a comfortable position. Close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing and body sensation. Notice any thoughts or feelings arisen during the meditation and shift your awareness back to your breath.

(5) Positive Thinking Strategies

Maintaining a positive attitude is important when you are dealing with stressful situations.

- Identify your negative thoughts.
- Focus on the positive side.
- Practice positive self-talks.

With an optimistic mind, you will better handle everyday stress in a productive way.

Conclusion

With patience and regular practice, you will be able to manage the relaxation techniques and enjoy the benefits.

*Produced by Hospital Authority
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