

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

- **Progressive Relaxation** is an antidote to anxiety. One can learn to relax. Tense muscles in separate parts of the body, and then relax that part. i.e.: Tense the muscles in head and neck, then relax them. Move on to rest of body: arms, hands, shoulders, back and belly, then butt, thighs, legs feet and toes—separately, relaxing before moving on to the next part of your body.
- **Teach your body to relax:** After the tensing and relaxing exercise, allow any tension that remains to drain out down head, neck, chest and arms, hand, and out your finger tips. Drain tension from chest, back, abdomen, legs and feet, and out your toes. This is a form of self-hypnosis.
- **Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Do breathing exercises throughout the day by breathing from your belly vs. your chest. Inhale through your nose and let your stomach rise. Exhale out of your mouth. Your belly comes in. Your chest shouldn't move. If you can't do diaphragmatic breathing, you can learn what it feels like by sitting in a straight-backed chair. Lock hands behind your back so your chest can't move. Breathe slowly. Think of inhaling the good and letting out any stressful energy. Do breathing exercise for 1 minute at a time. If you can't sleep, practice diaphragmatic breathing for long periods.
- **Visualization:** Think of a situation in which you are most relaxed and comfortable. You can create a place in your mind where you can visit and meditate when you feel anxious.
- In order to solve a problem of anxiety related to a job interview, public places, or another specific situation, bring yourself into a relaxed state before you do it. Use the above mentioned techniques to relax stop and control anxiety. As you experience success, anxiety will decrease because you know you can control it. 'Fake it till you make it.'
- **Cognitive exercise:** Be aware of negative thoughts, and offer evidence for them, and then evidence against. Develop a balanced view that you believe. Do with a counselor the first few times to practice. If negative thoughts occur, say, No! That's not true. The truth is: ..
- **Panic attacks** occur when there is low carbon dioxide in the blood stream. Some people bring this on by panting. Be aware of short, rapid chest breathing which brings your carbon dioxide levels down. You can get a paper bag and re-breathe the CO₂. You can run up and down stairs, or hold your breath. Realize you are not having a heart attack. It is just a physiological phenomenon that can be controlled because you can breathe slowly. When you begin to see symptoms of a panic attack, slow your breathing down.