

# GUIDELINES FOR COPING

## Relaxation

### **Preparation**

1. Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down somewhere comfortable in a quiet, airy room where you will not be interrupted.
2. If you are sitting, take off your shoes, uncross your legs, and rest your arms on the arms of a chair.
3. If you are lying down, lie on your back with your arms at your sides and cover yourself with a blanket.
4. Close your eyes, notice how you are breathing and where the muscle tensions are.

### **Breathing**

1. Start to breathe slowly and deeply, expanding your abdomen as you breathe in, then raising your rib cage to let more air in, until your lungs are filled right to the top.
2. Hold your breath for a couple of seconds and then breathe out slowly, allowing your rib cage and stomach to relax and empty your lungs completely.
3. Keep this slow, deep, rhythmic breathing going throughout your relaxation session

### **Relaxing**

After you have your breathing pattern established, start the following sequence: tense each part of the body on the in breath, hold your breath while you keep your muscles tense, then relax and breathe out at the same time.

1. Curl your toes hard and press your feet down—then relax.
2. Press your heels down and bend your feet up—then relax.
3. Tense your calf muscles—then relax.
4. Tense your thigh muscles, straighten your knees, making your legs stiff—then relax.
5. Make your buttocks tight—then relax.
6. Tense your stomach—then relax.
7. Bend your elbows and tense the muscles of your arms—then relax.
8. Hunch your shoulders and press your head back- then relax.
9. Clench your jaw, frown and screw up your eyes really tight—then relax.
10. Tense all your muscles together—then relax. Remember to breathe deeply and be aware when you relax of the feeling of physical wellbeing and heaviness spreading through your body.
11. After you have done the whole sequence and you are still breathing slowly and deeply, imagine something pleasant, eg, a beautiful country scene. Try to “see” whatever you have chosen as clearly as possible, concentrating your attention on it for 30 seconds. Do not hold your breathing during this time. Continue to breathe as you have been doing. After this, go on to visualise another peaceful object of your choice in a similar fashion.
12. Lastly, give yourself the instruction that when you open your eyes you will be perfectly relaxed but alert.

## **The six second breath**

Controlling your rate of breathing is one of the most important things you can do to stop your anxiety from getting out of control. If you keep your breathing to one breath every six seconds this will help: breathe in over three seconds and out over the next three seconds. This can be in stages (e.g., in–in–in, out–out–out). The six second breath can be used anywhere and anytime when you feel anxious. It does pay, however, to practise this technique a few times per day so that you will have it rehearsed for when you really need it.

## **Sleep**

Disturbed sleep is one of the features of withdrawal. It is not uncommon to experience difficulty falling asleep, have disturbing dreams or nightmares, night sweats, wake up in the middle of the night, or wake up early in the mornings. It can take a number of weeks before your sleep pattern returns to normal. It is important to remember that disturbed sleep is a normal part of withdrawal and that it is not permanent.

### ***Hints for better sleep...***

1. Have a comfortable sleeping environment.
2. Do not exercise before bedtime. Exercise earlier in the day to increase physical tiredness.
3. Lie down to go to sleep only when you are actually sleepy.
4. Do not use your bed for activities other than sleeping (sex is the only exception to this rule).
5. If you do not fall asleep within about 30 minutes after turning out the light, get up, go to another room, and do something that is not too arousing (eg, watch TV).
6. If you return to bed and still cannot sleep, repeat step
4. Do this as often as necessary until you fall asleep within 30 minutes of going to bed
7. If you wake up in the middle of the night and cannot go back to sleep, follow steps 5 and 6.
8. Get up at the same time every morning, regardless of how long you have slept. This will help your body to develop a regular sleep rhythm.
9. Do not nap during the day.
10. Do some form of relaxation before sleeping
11. Most of the thinking and worrying that we do in bed needs to be done—it just does not need to be done in bed. Take time earlier in the day for thinking and worrying.
12. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine or cigarettes late at night and cut down on your caffeine consumption during the day. Alcohol can make you sleepy, but it also has a waking effect after several hours sleep, so that it often results in a poor night's sleep overall. Hot drinks such as chamomile or valerian tea, or warm milk (with nutmeg) late at night can help put you to sleep.

## **Diet**

1. Drink lots of fluids: at least two litres a day. Water with a dash of lemon juice, fruit juices, cordial mixed with water and non-fizzy mineral water are very good. Also, try to keep the fluids going in throughout the day, taking small sips all the time.
2. Take nourishing meals in a relaxed environment. Avoid large meals. Try to eat small meals and snacks throughout the day rather than one big meal a day, and chew your food well.
3. Avoid greasy, fried, fatty foods, or large amounts of fatty meat if you have indigestion.

## **Craving**

1. Cravings are usually only very severe for short periods (usually less than 1 hour), then the severity of the craving reduces to a level which is easier to deal with. The goal is to see through this severe period.
2. Delay the decision for 1 hour as to whether you will use.
3. Distract yourself with some activity during this hour.
4. After an hour, ask yourself "Why don't I want to use?" and "What have I got to lose?"