

Relaxation

Three things to know

* An important part of teenage life should be relaxation. It is an essential part of maintaining health and wellbeing and being able to calmly deal with stress and pressure which, as we know, can be quite intense during the school years and especially in adolescence.

* Research shows that young people face many different kinds of stress, worry, and anxiety, and can feel overwhelmed for various reasons. Relaxation has been defined as a 'state of being free from tension and anxiety'. We often forget to switch off as adults but it is important that we do that in order to help children learn important skills.

Many studies highlight the benefits of relaxation and here are a few:

- Slows the heart and breathing rate
- Improves concentration and mood
- Reduces anger and frustration
- Reduces the activity of stress hormones
- Improves digestion
- Increases blood flow to the muscles
- Relaxes the muscles
- Improves sleep quality



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Three things to do if your child is at Key Stage 3 or 4

* One of the simplest relaxation techniques is to practise breathing. Teach your child to take deep, slow breaths when they are feeling anxious. Just a few deep breaths can provide an instant calming effect that can help reduce stress. Look out for mindfulness apps or video resources on YouTube that offer examples of breathing exercises, such as Headspace or Calm.

* Learning to relax is something that you can do together as a family. Try having a go at yoga or a relaxing activity together. Yoga will improve flexibility and posture and will give you and your child a sense of inner calm. Encourage your child to go to a local class or follow a simple yoga session on YouTube. Other helpful things could be having quiet time to read, going for a walk, listening to music or watching a feel-good film.

* Another technique for your child to try is 'imagery' – having a vision about a happy place so their brains can take a break. Ask them to write down a description of their happy place which includes looks, feels, smells and sounds. When they are stressed out, ask them to close their eyes and to think about it. Just like new skills, relaxation techniques require practice so keep prompting them to find out what works for them.

