General Relaxation Techniques

Begin by getting as comfortable as you can. Settle back comfortably. Just try to let go of all the tension in your body. Now take in a deep breath. Breathe right in and hold it (five-second pause). And now exhale. Just let the air out automatically and feel a calmer feeling beginning to develop. Now just carry on breathing normally and just concentrate on feeling heavy all over in a pleasant way. Study your own body heaviness. This should give you a calm and reassuring feeling all over (ten-second pause). Now let us work on tension and relaxation contrasts. Try to tense every muscle in your body. Every muscle; your jaw, tighten your eyes, your shoulder muscles, your arms, chest, back, stomach, legs, every part just tensing and tensing. Feel the tension all over your body – tighter and tighter tensing everywhere, and now let it go, just stop tensing and relax. Try to feel this wave of calm that comes over you as you stop tensing like that. A definite wave of calm (ten-second pause).

Now I want you to notice the contrast between the slight tensions that are there when your eyes are open and the disappearance of these surface tensions as your close your eyes. So while relaxing the rest of your body just open your eyes and feel the surface tensions disappear when you close your eyes. Now close your eyes and feel the greater degree of relaxation with your eyes closed (ten-second pause). All right, let us get back to the breathing. Keep your eyes closed and take in a deep, deep breath and hold it. Now relax your breath. Study the tension. Now let out your breath and notice the deepening relaxation—just go with it, beautifully relaxing now. Breathe normally and just feel the relaxation flowing into your forehead and scalp. Think of each part as I call it out—just relaxing—just letting go, easing up, eyes and nose, facial muscles. You might feel a tingling sensation as the relaxation flows in. You might have a warm sensation. Whatever you feel I want you to notice it and enjoy it to the jaw, tongue, and mouth so that your lips are slightly parted as the jaw muscles relax further and further. The throat and neck relaxing (five-second pause), feel the relaxation spread even under your armpits and down your sides, right into the stomach area. The relaxation becomes more and more obvious as you do nothing but just give way to the pleasant serene emotions which fill you as you let go more and more. Feel the relaxation—stomach and lower back all the way through in a warm, penetrating, wavy calm and down your hips, buttocks, and thighs to the very, very tips of your toes. The waves of relaxation just travel down your calves to your ankles and toes. Feel relaxed from head to toe. Each time you practice this you should find a deeper level of relaxation being achieved -- a deeper serenity and calm, a good calm feeling.
Now to increase the feelings of relaxation at this point what I want you to do is just keep on relaxing and each time you exhale, each time you breathe out for the next minute, I want you to think of the word relax to yourself. Just think the word relax as you breathe out. Now just do that for the next minute (one-minute pause). Okay, just feel that deeper feeling of relaxation. To even further increase the benefits, I want you to feel the emotional calm, those tranquil and serene feelings which tend to cover you all over, inside and out, a feeling of safe security, a calm indifference – these are the feelings that relaxation will enable you to capture more and more effectively each time you practice a relaxation sequence. Relaxation will let you arrive at a feeling of quiet inner confidence - - a good feeling about yourself (five-second pause). Now once more feel the heavy sensations that accompany relaxation as your muscles switch off so that you feel in good contact with your environment, nicely together, the heavy good feeling of feeling yourself calm and secure and very, very tranquil and serene.

Now we can deepen the relaxation still further by just using some special stimulus words. Let’s use the words calm and serene. What I would like you to do is to think these words to yourself twenty times or so. Don’t bother to count. Approximately twenty or thirty times just say to yourself calm and serene and then feel the deepening – ever, ever deepening – waves of relaxation as you feel so much more calm and serene. Now you just do that, take your time, think of the words and feel the sensations over and over (pause of about one minute). Good.

Now I am going to count backward from 10 to 1. At the count of 5, I would like you to open your eyes, and then by the time I reach 1, just kind of stretch and yawn and then you can switch off the recorder and just go back and relax on your own. Okay, now counting backward: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, open your eyes, 4, 3, 2, and 1. Now just stretch and kind of yawn and then slowly get up and switch off the recorder and then you can go back and carry on relaxing as long as you wish.