

embrace the relaxation revolution

BY ALICIA POWER

A quiet revolution is creeping through our lives. We are becoming acutely aware that we need to slow down, smell the roses and take time to relax.

It is in those quiet reflective moments that we realise just how busy our lives really are.

It is time for the relaxation revolution because it is in relaxation that a hidden power unfolds like the petals of a glorious flower. It is through relaxation that we unleash the secret storehouse of our creative thoughts and a happy heart, which ultimately influences how we live our lives. The way we think and feel determines how much fun we have! The more creative our thoughts and the happier we are, the more we live a deeply-satisfying, joyful life.

Some easy ways to build relaxation into our lives include creating beautiful and peaceful living environments, having regular mind-calming and body-healing treatments at our favourite spa, or through sport, yoga or meditation practices. With these many life-support options, we can build calmness and health into our full, productive lives.

We would all love a life within which our body stays youthful and active for most of our years; one in which we appreciate the small

things and love the people in our lives deeply; where we move into a mode of sustained clarity, centredness and contentment.

A long-distance runner takes care of their body, nourishes it correctly, stretching and toning it in order to maintain maximum output over a long time. Similarly for us, in our daily lives, there are some basic elements that need to be included, as though we are on a training regimen. Our long-distance race is the rest of our lives. Wear and tear comes from cutting corners, not noticing the small signals our body or psychological health give us.

Life is full of pressures. Our children, partners, employers or staff live pressured lives and we try to cope, not only with our own but with their lives as well. The news each day brings us the stresses of our nation and the world. Stress and pressure surround us. With these types of daily influences, how do we maintain health of mind and body — not to mention soul?

Why is Relaxation So Important?

Clinical trials in recent years have shown that regular deep relaxation processes have a powerful effect on maintaining a strong immune system, as well as guarding against heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, viral infections and other stress-related illnesses.

Studies have also shown that habitual deep-relaxation routines lower the incidence of depression, anxiety and insomnia, and decrease symptoms of PMS by up to 57%. The 'Relaxation Revolution' is knocking at our door as an answer to the many ills of our time, both mental and physical.

Relaxation takes wellness one step further, freeing the mind, opening it to lateral thinking and problem solving. Not only is the body in its best state for handling life when we relax, our mind becomes a tool that opens its storehouse of unending, solution-filled ideas.

Relaxation is the most important ingredient for living your life to its maximum creative and health-filled potential. The first step is to create a routine and habits that help you to relax, including a regular dive into a deep 'relaxation zone'.

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Regular Deep Relaxation

Doctor and medical researcher, Herbert Benson MD, introduced "The Relaxation Response" to the Western world - a way for anyone to relax in the middle of their work day or at home. The method involves simply closing your eyes and observing your breath, a centuries-old technique used in many ancient spiritual systems throughout the world. It has been clinically shown to immediately lower stress, calm the mind and relax the body, boosting the immune system — even if practiced for just five minutes!

One of the wonderful effects of this and similar breath-focused relaxation processes is that your 'spiritual heart' also begins to relax and open. The breath (in Latin, spiritus) keeps our 'spirit' alive and focusing on it draws our mind into contemplation of our moment-by-moment awareness of living and of the profound force bestowing life upon us. Simple relaxation processes using the breath open this part of our awareness and keep us happier than we might be otherwise! Literally, happiness (in a most profound sense) is waiting to be tapped with every breath. Now THAT is a big clue for all of us.

This is the key reason why relaxation is important — to deliberately change the way you see your world.

Those important five minutes of calm breathing could lift your mind out of 'boxed thinking' and deliver a package of bliss and stress-less calm. The world, *your world*, would be a better place. Imagine your life if you knew that you could open your mind to unlimited new solutions, ideas and happiness. Imagine calmly following your breath for 10 or even 20 minutes. Now we're entering a deep relaxation/happiness zone.

Imagine how easily you could enjoy more heartfelt relationships, where your reactions were relaxed, rather than intense from tiredness or stress. Imagine how your children or spouse could enjoy your playfulness, rather than your 'survival mode' strictness or stand-offishness. Imagine how much more indulgent you could be with others, as well as yourself, and how much happier you would be — all because of your relaxation routine. I'm sure you are now realising that it is as essential as a life raft at sea. It can save relationships, your health, your family's happiness, your self-esteem and your spiritual connection to life.

That is some package!

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seven tips to uplift

Here are some tips for bringing an uplifting sense of calmness into your daily life, to keep your mind and heart relaxed and happy.

There are many more elements you can include in your private *Relaxation Revolution* including food choices that tone your body and mind, healing music that relaxes your soul, aerobic exercises that stimulate spontaneity and joy, and lots more. The key thing to remember here is that including these ingredients in the mix of your life routine expands your soul, heart and mind. It keeps your body healthy and awakens your creative potential.



1 Daily stretching exercises, such as yoga, pilates, tai chi or chi kung, not only keep your body supple, toned and healthy, but also 'tone' your mind. Each time these stretching routines are used, your mind is 'caught' by the focused breathing, lifting your spirits and calming the mind. The breath forms a natural bridge for your mind to follow - straight into stillness and a relaxed sense of happiness.

2 Create a tranquil living environment with your furnishings, art and 'stuff' arranged for ideal balance and the easy flow of subtle energy, according to the ancient science of Feng Shui. There are many excellent Feng Shui books available. This will help to keep your mind focused and not distracted by frustrating clutter and the little things that are just not quite right. You will be amazed at how simple techniques and the correct adjustment of your living space will lift you into a happier state of being.

3 Drink plenty of water every day. Water calms the nervous system. When you feel stress impacting on your wellbeing, take a long drink of water and notice how you can feel yourself immediately relaxing. The nervous system not only conducts the traffic of electrical messages throughout your body, it also holds the key to balancing stress levels. When your thinking becomes confused and unclear, your nervous system contracts and tightens, increasing the 'radio static' and jumbled signals. When you drink water, it has the immediate effect of smoothing out the 'radio signals' through your body, allowing your mind to return to calm to



5 Take time out to be alone, to feel the pulse of life, clear your racing, driven thoughts and feel your heart. This is the new essential cure for our stress-filled lives.



6 The colours you choose to live with also influence your thinking and the way you feel. Green, blue and white are calming, as are warmer tones, like chocolate or bronze. Yellow, red and orange fire up the synapses, sparking action and assertion. So choose your colours carefully and deliberately, according to the effect you need in each particular area of your home. The sound of running water in your living environment (and at work) creates peacefulness, calms the nerves and helps you to relax. Plants add rejuvenating energy to your space. Each plant has an electromagnetic field, or aura, that radiates gentle, soothing energy. Make use of this natural energy bath wherever you have enough light to ensure your plants stay healthy.

Doorway Home

4 Visits to Spa Retreats - even simply enjoying a few hours in a Day Spa in your local area for a nurturing massage - can melt your head, heart and body. Therapists are trained to be 'centred' and to deliver a genuine service to soothe your mind, as well as your body. Yet even a simple bath at home can bring you stillness and peace, provided you create a totally private, uninterrupted space.

We all want fulfilling lives and the Relaxation Revolution can fly us there faster than working hard at it. Smart ideas and brilliant solutions all come from relaxed moments of creativity. Not only that, we can also reach for the stars and feel the essence of life pouring through our breath if we take the time to observe it. Tapping into deep relaxation and sublime happiness via quiet, focused breathing is a gateway into joy and love. Right under our noses is a door 'home' that can spread its happiness into every part of our lives. The Relaxation Revolution is indeed that; a revolution of the spirit, asking to be given a quiet moment to show itself to you. Why not stop right now and enjoy it? Five minutes of quietly observing your breath, in and out, in and out... Enjoy!

7 'SPA' comes from the words Salus per Aquam or healing through water. Immersing yourself in water is immediately soothing and an important component of your heart and mind-opening relaxation routine. The bath can become your private sanctuary for new ideas, opening your heart and increasing your self-esteem. Having a simple bath relaxes your body deeply and the warmth of the water calms your soul, melts anxiety and opens a broader perspective.