

### Services Provided:

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Pre-surgical evaluations
- Psychological evaluations

Current and previous issues of the CHP monthly newsletters are now on our website under "News & Info."



Melanie S. Weitzenfeld, Ph.D.

### Contact Information

Colorado Health Psychology  
7995 E. Prentice Ave, Suite 207  
Greenwood Village, CO 80111  
P: 303.596.0454  
F: 888.299.1224

# COLORADO HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

www.coloradohealthpsychology.com

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 6

JUNE 2009

## Relaxation Training Jamison, 1996

One of the most commonly used procedures that can be classified as complementary health care is relaxation training. Chronic pain patients tend to experience residual muscle tension as a function of the bracing, posturing, and emotional arousal often associated with pain. Such responses, maintained over a long period, can exacerbate pain in injured areas and increase muscular discomfort. For example, patients with low back

pain or limb injuries commonly develop neck stiffness and tension-type headaches. Relaxation training can reduce pain by decreasing muscular tension, alleviating anxiety, distracting the patient from the pain, and enhancing self-efficacy in coping with pain (the belief that one can do something to produce a specific outcome). In short, this training can increase the patient's sense of control over physiological responses.

In a pain management program, patients are taught a variety of relaxation strategies, including diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic relaxation, imagery, and cue-controlled relaxation techniques. Biofeedback training is also commonly employed.

Current and previous issues of the CHP newsletter can be found on our website. Please feel free to email us with topic requests, questions, etc. for future issues.

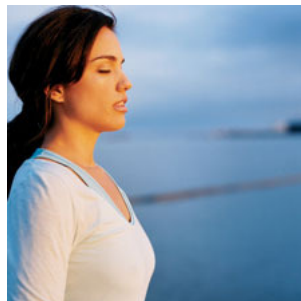
[melanie@coloradohealthpsychology.com](mailto:melanie@coloradohealthpsychology.com)

## Diaphragmatic Breathing

Learning to breathe correctly is the most important relaxation technique a patient can master, and if they become proficient in proper breathing techniques, they have half the relaxation battle won. Diaphragmatic breathing is often part of most relaxation treatment protocols, but can be used by itself (Belar & Dear-dorff, 1995). Controlled breathing tech-

niques produce favorable changes in your brain waves by relaxing your body through techniques that deliberately change your pattern of breathing. While short, shallow breathing is characteristic of a person under stress, deep abdominal breathing is quite relaxing. This procedure involves asking an individual to begin breathing in a

manner that naturally elicits relaxation, and it enables us to control tension in our bodies. Most adults will breathe with their chests instead of with their diaphragm. To breathe diaphragmatically, they need to take deep, slow, relaxing breaths and push the air down into the chest—expanding the belly, not the thoracic cavity and shoulders. With each deep breath, patients will feel more relaxed. Breathing in this way will trigger the relaxation response.



# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is another form of relaxation training, and most people find it easy to perform. Essentially, a person is asked to tense and then relax certain muscles in his or her body (Belar & Dear-dorff, 1995). Jacobson (1939, as cited in Belar & Deardorff, 1995) is credited with developing this technique , which as been incorporated into many standard psychological interventions, such as systematic deconditioning. The goal is to make individuals more aware of their muscle tension so that they can quickly and easily learn to release that ten-

sion. In progressive muscle relaxation, a person focuses on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. This helps the person to focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation. This leads to an increased aware-

ness of physical sensations in the body and an enhanced ability to identify stress when it first begins. One method is to start by tensing and relaxing the muscles in your toes and working your way up to the neck and head. One recommendation is to tense the muscles for five seconds, relax them for thirty seconds, and then repeat. It is important that patients concentrate on letting the tension go in each muscle.



# Guided Imagery

Guided imagery is based on the concept that the body and mind are connected. Guided imagery first uses relaxation techniques that put the patient in a quiet state of mind, then allows them to focus their imagination on images that can help them get release stress and relax. In this relaxation technique, the patient forms mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation. During visualization, it is recommended that the patient try to use as many senses as possible including sight,

smell, sound, and touch. If the patient imagines relaxing at the ocean, for instance, they should be encouraged to think of such things as the smell of the salt water, the sound of the crashing waves, and the warmth of the sun on their body. Guided imagery is made easier when the patient is sitting or lying down in a quiet

place, their eyes are closed, and any tight clothing is loosened. With the help of an imagery tape, a professional helper, or just one's imagination, those who practice guided imagery get into a deeply relaxed state and envision, with great detail relating to all the senses, a relaxing scene. The patient may also imagine a wise "guide" with them, answering their questions and asking them questions that they must ponder to get to a better place in their lives. This "guide" is a representation of their subconscious that they aren't generally able to access.

