

Relaxation and Focussing Techniques

When you are learning new skills or preparing to do a routine in training or in competition, it is very important to have the ability to relax your body and your mind and to be able to focus on where you are and what you are about to do.

Like doing a skill or a routine, learning to relax and focus takes time and practice.



Relaxation

What do you find relaxing? Is it sitting - doing nothing, painting, fishing, going for a walk, reading a book, listening to music, shopping, doing weights, a gym work out, talking to a friend or playing sport?

Think about things that you do that relax you and find ways to build them into your weekly routine. This is a way both to prevent stress, better manage stress, which will help you to stop yourself getting angry, frustrated or upset. When you get stressed your blood pressure rises, you get tense and you stop thinking as clearly as normal about what you are doing.

There are a number of quick relaxation techniques that take just a few minutes. You can use these in many places, for example:



- taking a few minutes to relax in the middle of a test, by deep breathing with your eyes closed to help reduce anxiety when you find yourself getting stressed and not thinking clearly;
- when you are having trouble getting the techniques right as you are learning a new skill, it can be a good idea to take a break - walk away - use one of the techniques described later on this sheet - and then come back to your training session;
- taking a few minutes to unwind and focus before you start doing a routine at a competition.

Technique No 1

Deep breathing

Close your eyes.

Breathe in through the nose and let the air fill the bottom of your lungs first, by breathing using your upper abdominal muscles so you fill your lungs completely.

Breathe out slowly, concentrating on letting the muscles of your body relax, particularly those around your neck and shoulders.

Repeat this exercise twice more, allowing yourself to relax more deeply.

Keep your eyes closed and breathe normally until you feel ready to continue.

Technique No 2

Stretching

Close your eyes.

Stretch your muscles, reach the arms above the head and stretch or just stretch whatever part of the body you feel needs it.

Keep your eyes closed and breathe normally until you feel ready to continue.

Technique No 3

Focus breathing

Close your eyes.

Breathe in through the nose and as you breathe out say a positive statement to yourself like:

"relax"

or

"I am capable"

See also: 'Visualisation, Confidence and Concentration' and 'Focussing'