

# M & M

Mills & McKinney  
Hearing Practice



# Relaxation Techniques

Here are four relaxation techniques that can help you relax and reduce stress. The idea is to feel relaxed whilst you hear tinnitus, rather than becoming anxious and stressed by it. This sends a very powerful message to your mind and body that it is OK to hear tinnitus, and to start filtering it out as a meaningless sound.

To begin with, you may only be able to do this for brief periods of time – do what you can. But keep going and try to relax every day building up from a few minutes, to around 20 minutes at a time. The longer and the more often you practice these relaxation techniques, the greater the benefits, the more you can reduce stress and the more you can teach yourself to habituate to your tinnitus.

If you find it hard to do this in a quiet environment, have some gentle background sound around you. There are many apps and online recordings of nature sounds – pick a couple that work for you and alternate them so that you don't get bored. The background sound should be slightly softer than your tinnitus, never louder.

**1. Breath focus.** In this simple, powerful technique, you take long, slow, deep breaths (also known as abdominal or belly breathing). As you breathe, you gently disengage your mind from distracting thoughts and sensations. However, if you find this difficult, just focus on breathing a bit slower and a bit more deeply than normal.

**2. Body scan.** This technique blends breath focus with progressive muscle relaxation. After a few minutes of deep breathing, focus on one part of the body or group of muscles at a time and mentally release any physical tension you feel there. If you find it difficult to just let go of the tension, try gently tightening that muscle group for a slow count of 5 and then let go. A body scan can help boost your awareness of the mind-body connection.

**3. Guided imagery.** For this technique, you need to conjure up soothing scenes, places, or experiences in your mind to help you relax and focus. You can find free apps and online recordings of calming scenes—just make sure to choose imagery you find soothing and that has personal significance. Guided imagery may help you reinforce a positive vision of yourself, but it can be difficult for those who have intrusive thoughts or find it hard to conjure up mental images. If mental images are hard, have a photo or an object that you can focus on that reminds you of pleasant experiences.

**4. Mindfulness meditation.** This practice involves sitting comfortably, focusing on your breathing, and bringing your mind's attention to the present moment without drifting into concerns about the past or the future. This form of meditation has enjoyed increasing popularity in recent years.

Rather than choosing just one technique, sample several to see which one works best for you.

### Further information

Please see our Tinnitus emergency kit resource, and our managing tinnitus, changing negative thinking and tinnitus FAQ resources. You will find further information Tinnitus management in our services section. You will also find a blog about tinnitus in our Blog section.

The British Tinnitus Association also has some useful information. You can find this at <https://www.tinnitus.org.uk>

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