



## Eliciting the Relaxation Response

There are two basic components involved in eliciting the relaxation response:

**1) A mental focusing tool**, such as watching your breath, or repeating a word, phrase, prayer, sound, or using a repetitive exercise such as running or weight lifting, or thinking of a soothing image, to help you shift your mind away from external thoughts and worries.

**2) A quiet, aware, 'non-judging' attitude**, not worrying about how well you are doing, but gently directing your mind back to your focus when you notice yourself caught up in other thoughts.

### Step-by-Step:

**Step 1** Choose a focus word or phrase.

*Pick a focus word or phrase, prayer or image. You may also choose to simply focus on the rhythm of your breathing, an image of a place you've been to, seen a picture of, or a place you've imagined. Some examples of phrases to use are:*

In breath	Out breath
In	Out
Deep	Slow
Calm	Ease
Smile	Release
Present	Moment
Wonderful	Moment

**Step 2:** Sit or lie quietly in a comfortable position.

**Step 3:** Close your eyes.

**Step 4:** Relax your muscles.

**Step 5:** Breathe slowly and naturally, and as you do, repeat your focus word or phrase or picture your chosen image as you exhale.

**Step 6:** Assume a non-judging attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, "Oh well," and gently return to the repetition.

**Step 7:** Continue for 10 minutes, starting with shorter times, until you feel comfortable with the relaxation.

**Step 8:** Practice this technique once or twice daily.

(Adapted from Herbert Benson, M.D., Your Maximum Mind)