

LIVING WELL WITH LIMITED ATTENTION AND HYPERACTIVITY

Information from Helena Bester's book
'How to Cope with AD/HD' (Publisher: Human & Rousseau)

FOCUS AND RELAXATION EXERCISE

This exercise is calming and promotes normal sleeping patterns. It can be done every evening and provides a meaningful way to end the day, or during the day to enhance focusing ability and calmness. Parts of the exercise may be used to counteract anxiety. This exercise has an immediate effect on brainwave patterns and a long-term effect on focusing ability. People with AD/HD usually have very poor insight into the part of their behaviour that is problematic and frustrating for yourself and others. The Alpha brainwave activity generated by this exercise improves insight into your behaviour, so you can decide to change negative patterns of behaviour systematically.

Studying: Work for the duration of your attention span, do the exercise and then continue your studying.

In exams: You can do part of the exercise to control stress while the question papers are being handed out, or before doing an oral exam.

For parents: End a stressful day with your child by doing the exercise.

Read the exercise out loud to yourself step by step - or even better - tape-record it and then play it back.

1. Find a quiet spot where you will not be disturbed. Lie comfortably on your back. Close your eyes and relax.
2. Concentrate on your breathing. Become aware of the rhythmic rise and fall of your chest as the air moves in and out. The moment your concentration wavers, bring it quietly back to focus on your breathing. If your breathing becomes faster and shallower, simply focus your attention on your breathing until it becomes calmer again. When your breathing becomes peaceful and even, and your thoughts are not wandering, breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for four counts and breathe out for four counts. Concentrate on releasing tension on each exhalation. Breathe out all negative feelings. Repeat three times.
3. Focus on your legs. Contract your thigh muscles and then relax them. The feet fall away from one another relaxed.
4. Raise your hips slightly and draw them away from your waist. It feels as if your spine is lengthening. Now relax the hips on the floor again.
5. Lengthen your arms slightly from your shoulders and place them down alongside your body with the palms facing upwards. Leave a small space between your arms and your body. Relax your arms and shoulders.
6. Adjust your body slightly so that you are lying as symmetrically as possible.
7. Relax the muscles around your mouth and eyes. Focus on your brain. Give the billions of brain cells permission to relax.
8. Feel a softness and calmness wash over your whole body.
9. Relax completely.
10. Focus on your centre. (the place inside your body, behind your belly-button, where you get an "empty" feeling when you become stressed). Visualise a spiralling movement in your centre, like a whirlwind. Imagine the narrow point facing inward and the wider point to the outside. You will notice that the movement stops when your thoughts wander. Try to keep this spiral movement going for at least a minute without interruption. Now let the spiral go.
11. Next, visualise the colour red. Focus on it for a few seconds. Think of orange and see it in your thoughts. Just see orange for a few seconds. Now think of yellow and hold the colour in your thoughts for a few seconds. Now visualise green for a few seconds. See a strong green colour - not too dark, like grass green. Now, bring the colour blue into your thoughts and focus on it. Think of purple and hold it in your thoughts. If you find it difficult to see purple in your mind, think of something purple. Visualise it, cut the object out of your thoughts and keep only the colour in mind.
12. Now switch off your thoughts. Think of nothing. If a sound or a thought enters your mind let it "float" by like a leaf on a stream of water. Rest in the silence. Bring your attention back to a neutral place where you think about nothing. Give yourself permission simply to be. Try to quieten your thoughts for about three minutes.
13. Now start moving your toes and fingers slightly. Bring the movement through your arms and legs towards your spine. Wriggle the shoulders and back a little. Contract the facial muscles. Open your eyes.

On completion of this exercise you feel calm, focused and relaxed. There are no chaotic or confusing thoughts whirling around in your head. There are no feelings of stress or anxiety in the pit of your stomach. You are ready to go to sleep peacefully or to focus effectively on the next study session or task.

You can do the exercise more effectively once you have done it a few times. Experiment with it to find a suitable pace. If you are doing it with your child, the words you use should be adapted to your child's age. You would not, for example, tell a four-year-old to visualise green.

Steps 3 to 10 are not essential. You can move directly from Step 2 to 11, but the visualising is more effective if steps 3 to 10 are followed. Steps 2 to 10 help to get a very active or stressed person calm and focused more quickly and are very good for unloading tension at the end of a busy day. Step 10 (the one where you keep the spiral movement going in the centre of your body) can be used as a short exercise on its own during stressful situations. The visualisation of the colours in Step 11 follows the order of the colours of the rainbow. An easy way to remember the order is ROY-G-BE

The whole exercise can be done effectively in less than ten minutes. If you do this exercise in bed at night, you might spontaneously fall asleep peacefully by Step 13.

EYE-MOVEMENT EXERCISES

A large percentage people with AD/HD have reading difficulties. Reading is usually a cumbersome and slow process for them. If they are able to work out the content of the story or reading material in any other way, they will. For example, they immediately look for pictures, symbols or any illustrations that will give them a clue about the contents.

One of the factors that play a role in poor reading skills is eye movements. Poor readers often have difficulty getting their eyes to follow text that crosses the middle line of their vision. Their eyes often become tired and burning when they focus up close for long periods and might have difficulty blinking rapidly and continuously. This compromises control over the movement of the eye, and impacts negatively on reading ability. The opposite is also true: incorrect reading habits can compromise healthy eye movements.

Eye exercises alone might not improve reading ability, but helps to exercise the brain as they improve interaction between the right and left side of the brain. Problems with visual memory can lead to spelling difficulties, clumsiness, and poor motor integration as the transfer of messages from the one half of the brain to the other is impaired.

Eye-movement exercises also release tension, improve focusing, and increase your attention span, especially when done in the evenings just before doing the Focus and Relaxation Exercise.

For younger children, use a moving object that they can follow with their eyes. A tassel at the end of a string about 40 cm long works well. A tennis ball tied to the end of a piece of fishing line that hangs from the ceiling is also effective. Older children are usually able to manipulate the movement of their eyes themselves during the exercises and do not need an object to follow, unless their focusing ability is extremely poor. Once they are familiar with the exercises, they can be completed in three minutes.

Eye exercises

Lie down comfortably on your back and look at the ceiling. Relax. Music is optional. Instrumental music with quite a clear rhythm works well, and the exercises can be done according to the rhythm of the music.


1. Focus on a point on the ceiling directly above your head. Blink fast and continuously for 30 seconds without pausing. Try to maintain an even but fast rhythm. Rest for a few seconds.
2. Now look as far to your right as you possibly can without turning your head. Determine a focus point. Now, look as far to the left as possible without moving your head and determine a focus point. Look backwards and forwards from the right focus point to the left focus point in a straight line, and back to the right one again. Your eyes are following a straight line back and forth above you. Repeat ten times. Rest for a few seconds. (This exercise can also be done by following a moving object with your eyes.)
3. Next, look up and down without moving your head. Move your eyes towards the crown of your head, as far back as you can without moving your head, and find a focus point. Now look in a straight line down to your feet, as far as you can go, and find a focus point. Look up and down between the two focus points ten times in a


straight line. Rest for ten seconds. (This exercise can also be done by following a moving object with your eyes.)


4. Draw a big circle on the ceiling with your eyes. Draw the circle five times with your eyes moving in the same circular direction. Then draw the circle five times with your eyes moving in the opposite direction. Try to maintain a flowing, steady motion. Rest for a few seconds. (This exercise can also be done by following a moving object with your eyes.)
5. Draw a big figure of **8** on the ceiling with your eyes. The **8**'s crossing must coincide with your own midline (in other words, it must be straight above your nose). Draw the **8** five times in one direction and then five times in the opposite direction. Rest for a few seconds. (This exercise can also be done by following a moving object with your eyes.)
6. Now, draw a diagonal line with your eyes from one corner of the ceiling to the corner diagonally opposite. Follow the imaginary line up and down ten times with your eyes. Draw a line between the other two corners of the ceiling with your eyes. Follow that line up and down ten times with your eyes. Rest for a few seconds. (This exercise can also be done by following a moving object with your eyes.)
7. Finally, close your eyes and turn your head slowly from side to side. Try to turn you head far enough so that your cheek touches the pillow on the one side and then on the other. See a summary of the eye-movement exercises below:

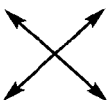
1. Blink for 30 seconds

2. 10 x back and forth

3.  10 x up and down

4.  5 x to the left
5 x to the right

5.  5 x to the left
5 x to the right

6.  10 x from right to left diagonally up and down
10 x from left to right diagonally up and down

7. Turn the head 10 x from side to side.

Eye charts

Two eye charts are used for this exercise which helps to improve reading speed and concentration.

Print out the two eye charts. If you are a parent whose child doesn't know all the letters yet, make your own with numbers or simple images. Eye charts with letters work well when your child has to practise phonics.

Each eye chart has ten rows with ten symbols in each. One is a hand-held card (7 x 7cm). The other chart is A4 size and is stuck on the wall. Hold the hand-chart 30cm away from your eyes, and stand about 1,5m away from the wall chart.

Read the first letter on the hand-chart and then move your focus to the first letter on the wall chart. Without using your finger, read every subsequent letter alternating between the hand chart and the wall chart.

a	k	l	e	m	s	o	p	r	t
b	o	r	k	f	g	i	h	n	v
w	p	l	k	o	h	u	d	a	g
j	w	p	k	r	t	l	v	y	d
a	m	o	t	s	d	u	e	n	b
u	i	h	s	r	p	g	d	o	f
v	a	j	e	k	b	l	f	m	w
g	m	b	l	i	j	k	d	h	e
h	f	p	k	n	o	g	i	r	w
m	a	f	b	o	l	d	h	m	n

Note your reading speed so you can see if there is an improvement over time. Don't expect a child under 10y with a reading problem to read the entire chart in one session, just start with three lines per day. Encourage a child whose concentration is easily distracted to keep his/her attention focused to improve his/her time.

b g i h a f j m r p
o a b e l o p v e m
d u g i n j v h s t
k b a h f m l o l w
e d g k j i r n b a
f s j b v w a u i t
m w t r d r e f h e
v u b v t o m u o m
s a f e d b p t f i
p n e k o j h s b l

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.