

## **RESOURCES FOR REDUCING STRESS**

The counseling staff has compiled a variety of Relaxation Response CD's that are now on permanent reserve in the library. In the on-line catalog, go to Course Reserves, and in the "classes" drop-down they are listed under MISC: Counseling.

### **Bringing Relaxation to Your Life**

Start a relaxation response practice with this top selling CD. Acquaint yourself with key techniques such as breath awareness, body scan relaxation and the use of a focus word. Increase your awareness of "mindfulness," of sensations, thoughts and sound, and take away new tools to help you integrate the relaxation response into daily activities.

### **Progressive Relaxation and Autogenic Training**

This recording guides you through two 30 minute relaxation exercises. The ability to relax your body and calm your mind is necessary for health and well-being. The CD helps you discover your capacities for relaxation and inner calm.

### **Sights and Sounds Meditation**

Would you like to meditate by a babbling brook or stroll on a beach during sunset, feeling the tension drain from your body? This CD-ROM has three, easy to follow meditations to relax and refresh your body.

### **Collection of Relaxation Exercises**

Breathing & word focus, beach relaxation secret garden, mountain meditation, four mini-relaxations, muscle relaxation, special place, and instrumental blend.

We also recommend the following books which are also on reserve in the Library:

- Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook 3rd Edition  
By Davis, Eshelman and McKay
- When Perfect Isn't Good Enough: Strategies for Coping with Perfectionism  
By Martin Anthony and Richard Swinson

The Counseling Center also offers a variety of workshops and trainings throughout the year. These activities are provided free of charge to PLU students and more information can be found on our website: <http://www.plu.edu/counseling>



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## **Relaxation and Stress Management**

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## **TIPS FOR REDUCING STRESS**

### **THE CALM REMINDER**

A simple, quick relaxation technique that can be done anytime, anywhere.

1. When you realize it would be helpful to relax, think the word “calm” to yourself.
2. Then, use each letter of the word “calm” to increase relaxation further:
  - C = Chest**  
Breathe deeply, relax shoulders and chest
  - A = Arms**  
Relax arm muscles, think “spaghetti” arms
  - L = Legs**  
If standing, don’t lock knees; if sitting relax muscles.
  - M = Mouth**  
Relax jaw, don’t let teeth touch, lips slightly parted or barely closed.
3. Keep saying the word “calm” in your mind as you continue to breathe deeply and relax your muscles.
4. Practice this procedure each day, or whenever needed!
5. Contact someone at the Counseling Center if you want further assistance in improving relaxation.

### **GETTING HIGHER QUALITY SLEEP**

**Exercise:** Exercise during the day earlier than 4 hours before bedtime.

**Regular bed time and wake up time:** Go to bed and get up at regular times, even if you’re tired in the morning. Don’t vary your time of going to bed or getting up. However, if you have consistent sleep problems, then try getting up half and hour earlier in the morning than your usual time; it may help you get to sleep that night.

**Don’t fight sleep:** Don’t try to make yourself sleep. If you’re unable to fall asleep after 20-30 minutes, leave your bed, engage in some relaxing activity (such as watching TV, sitting in a chair and listening to a relaxation tape, or having a cup of herbal tea), and do not return to bed until you are sleepy. Repeat until you fall asleep.

**No big meals (or big hunger) before bed:** No heavy meals before bedtime. Eat your last meal at least 2 hours before bedtime. Avoid stimulating or spicy foods. Also, avoid going to bed hungry. A very small snack an hour before bedtime may help.

**No Stimulants:** Avoid any caffeine, nicotine, sugar, or use of other substances within four hours of going to bed. Avoid moderate-to-heavy use during the day.

**Sleep Ritual:** Develop a 30-minute sleep ritual before bedtime. This is a relaxing activity you do every night in the same order at about the same time before you get into bed. Avoid vigorous physical or mental activity and emotional upsets. A hot shower, bath, or other relaxing or inspirational reading activity may be helpful.

**Attitude:** Go to sleep with a positive attitude; visualize and imagine that you will sleep well.

**The bed is for sleep:** Eliminate non-sleep activities in bed (such as reading or

doing other work) to strengthen associations between your bed and sleeping (unless these other activities are part of your sleep ritual).

**Medical:** Get a full physical from a physician to rule out medical problems or medication side effects. Also, for persistent sleep problems or daytime fatigue, a physician can refer you to a sleep center for further testing.

**Avoid sleeping pills and alcohol:** Non-prescription sleeping pills (or other medications that induce sleep) can be very addictive. Consider a sleeping pill only as a last resort and only for one or two nights. A physician can prescribe a non-addictive sleep medication if necessary. Also, sleeping pills and alcohol can disrupt sleep quality, leading to continued fatigue.

**Naps:** Avoid naps, except for quick “power” naps no longer than 20 minutes and no later than the afternoon.

**Thoughts:** Keep a notebook by your bed. If something is on your mind, you can get some peace by writing it down, knowing it will be there when you wake up. Then, focus on positive thoughts.

**Noise:** Reduce noise through the use of ear plugs or a noise-making machine such as a fan or a white noise machine

**Temperature:** Keep your room between 60 and 70 degrees.

**No fear:** If you can’t sleep, don’t get too upset; don’t fight, resist, or fear sleeplessness. This will make it harder to fall asleep. The next day you may be somewhat tired but will still be able to do what you need to do.

**Mental health:** Talk to a therapist to rule out any psychological causes of sleep disturbance.