

HOW TO RELAX EVEN WHEN YOU'RE BUSY

In this second part of our two-week course in tension control, you'll learn how to get more done—by taking it easier

By CURTIS MITCHELL

President of the Association for Control of Tension

THE THOUGHT is preposterous, even revolutionary. How in the world can you do more by doing less?

The science of the body provides the answer. By relaxing, you unlock tensions that inhibit and hamper. By relaxing, you work better and play happier. And you feel like a million. So take it easier, science says, and get more done.

You can relax in two ways. You can relax your entire body all at once during your day's quiet time, according to principles taught in the first part of our two-week course (FAMILY WEEKLY, Feb. 17, 1963). Or you can relax a part of your body at any time, using the same principles of locating a tightness in a muscle and releasing it. We call this last method Differential Relaxation, and busy people love it. It has two goals.

First, it seeks to eliminate tension in muscles that are not really required to do the job you are undertaking.

Second, it seeks to reduce tension in muscles that must be used in your work.

Science has proved that you can work and relax at the same time. In one famous experiment, a group of girls sat on stools, legs hanging free, as they read magazines. Electrical instruments measured the amount of agitation they developed in their leg muscles. Later, after they had been taught to relax differentially, they were subjected to the same experiment. This time, the instruments measured a much lower degree of tension. The girls were saving energy they had wasted before; they were using only enough energy to do the job of reading.

Moving your eyes along a line of print employs certain eye muscles. No need to twist your legs about a chair, to frown, or to gasp. You can learn to eliminate such tensions.

Train yourself and save yourself. Do this dur-

ing your working day, and you will be fresher at night, readier to eat a good meal, and able to sleep more soundly.

These rules will help:

1. As you tackle a job, tell yourself, "I'm going to use only the muscles I must use."
2. Tell yourself, "I'm going to use only enough strength (contraction) to do what I must do."
3. After you have started, let your mind "scan" your body to see if muscles, besides those you need, have tightened. After a few trials, you will be able to do this in a split second. Typical lurking places for contraband tensions are the neck and shoulders, jaw and abdomen. If you discover unneeded contractions, do away with them. And get on with your work.

4. Ask yourself if your working muscles are tighter or harder than need be. If so, taper off; seek a balance between whatever expenditure of energy is essential to get the job done and the least amount that you must apply to it.

TRY THESE RULES for a few weeks and note the results. Most students of relaxing slip into the habit of scanning their bodies at various times during the day, noting tensions that exist in muscles that are not needed and relaxing them. At first, this makes some persons uncomfortable, so accustomed have they grown to burning up energy. But when they learn to throttle back, they discover they are working faster, with better control, and enjoying it more.

It seems preposterous that you can take it easier and get more done. But every day of their lives, thousands of persons are demonstrating that this is true and using it to build successful careers and homes. Differential Relaxation really works—in the kitchen or at the movies, behind the wheel or behind a desk.

Try it and be invigorated.

Instructions for Practice Sessions

SECOND WEEK—

General and Every Day: Last week you were taught to relax several important muscle groups. This week you will learn to relax other groups until you can detect and release tensions in the 15 most important segments of your body.

Happily, relaxation spreads from one muscle

to another. Relax the abdominal wall, and it spreads to the stomach and other internal organs. Relax any muscle, and others nearby relax.

It's like compound interest on money. In this case, the greater your investment of time, the bigger the benefits.



FIG. 1



FIG. 2

1st DAY: Your assignment is to locate normal tensions to find unsuspected *useless or extreme* tensions, then to relax them. In every lesson, keep the eyes closed except when you must read instructions.

Today you study neck muscles. Take the basic position, sitting in your chair so that your back is supported, feet either flat or resting on heels. Close the eyes, rest forearms on the arms of your chair, and drop the head forward (Fig. 1). Rest quietly for five minutes, estimating the time.

Now raise the head slowly until it is erect and in the position it usually occupies when you work (Fig. 2). As you raise it, you should feel a tightening of muscles in the back of the neck. Quickly relax and let the head fall forward again. Allow the back-of-the-neck muscles to go to zero.

Next, raise the head slightly till it is only half-erect and note the tension in the back of the neck. Quickly relax and go to zero.

Finally, with head drooping, *imagine* that you are pulling it upright and holding it there for a moment; then relax as before. Did you feel the very slight tension and relaxation of muscles at the back of your neck? Continue to relax for 10 or 15 minutes.

Next, start with the head erect and follow the same procedure while bending the head to the right (Fig. 3). The first bending movement is vig-



FIG. 3



FIG. 4

orous, the second slight, and the third *imaginary*. Bending to the right, you should note tensions in the right side of the neck as those muscles contract. Relax them and go to zero. Then bend the head to the left (Fig. 4) and repeat.

Finally, let the head drop forward and relax the whole body, with all neck muscles at zero, for at least 10 minutes. Time: 45 to 60 minutes.



FIG. 5

2nd DAY: Today's subjects are the muscles of your forehead and eyelids. Many persons use these muscles so much that they waste energy and distort their features. Take the basic position and rest for five minutes, guessing at the time.

Now raise your eyebrows as high as you can (Fig. 5) so that the forehead is wrinkled. Notice the tension all across the forehead. Quickly relax. Lift the eyebrows again, noting the tension,