

# **H.A.L.T.**

## **Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired**

In recovery it is important to stay in touch with your feelings and needs. H.A.L.T., this tried and true slogan can help. Sometimes the onset of anxiety or a sudden change in mood can be traced to you having forgotten to eat, forcing blood sugar levels to drop. Other times you may be carrying resentment, or feeling lonely, or are just too tired. Taking a little time out from a busy schedule to ask yourself if you are feeling too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired, gets you in touch with your needs and feelings. When you know what you are feeling, you can make choices and take the appropriate action to get your need for food, companionship, or rest, met. Being too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, are conditions that leave you vulnerable to the temptations that lead you away from your substance use goals. Part of recovery is learning to pay attention to these inner signals and practice appropriate ways to meet your needs and resolve issues in a manner that will enhance your substance use goals. You need to learn to communicate with your body.

### **Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired.**

These are things you are warned against when entering into recovery. When you become too hungry, too angry, too lonely or too tired, you may seek relief in alcohol and/or drugs. Learning to take care of yourself may be a new skill if you have been abusing drugs and alcohol over a long period of time.

### **Thoughts**

When you're hungry can you take the time to slow down and eat? When you're tired, can you remember to maybe go to bed a little earlier? When you're angry can we remember to express it in the right time and place, or recognize you're at fault? Are you actively addressing social and personal support needs or sitting at home alone feeling lonely? Or would you rather use?

Following are four articles addressing the needs H.A.L.T presents

**HUNGRY**-Substance abuse and Nutrition, Eating for Recovery

**ANGRY**- Anger ... Manage It Or It Will Manage You

**LONELINESS**-Coping with Loneliness

**TIRED**-Tips for Healthy Sleep Hygiene

Edition Revised June 3, 2005

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND NUTRITION

Alcohol and drug abuse results in nutritional deficiencies due to:

**Decreased dietary intake** – Eating becomes less of a priority and results in a significant drop in the amount of food consumed. The type and quality of food moves toward more convenience and processed foods that are less nutritious.

**Decreased absorption** – As the body becomes weakened over time, its ability to absorb the already lacking dietary vitamins and minerals becomes impaired. For individuals abusing alcohol, the stomach and intestinal tract becomes damaged and can begin to leak toxins and allergens into the body causing other health problems. A diet high in refined sugars and processed foods can reduce the body's ability to absorb fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals.

**Increased use of nutrients** - Stress increases the body's need for all nutrients particularly vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc, selenium and vitamin A. The body's stress regulators, the endocrine glands, require larger amounts of these nutrients to help maintain a balanced healthy state. Once the body becomes unbalanced, it is difficult for the mind to stay balanced and focused on the task of recovery.

Relapse can be the result of poor nutrition and unbalanced body chemistry due to prolonged nutritional abuse. Low blood sugar, called hypoglycemia, can be a factor in relapse. Blood sugar, or glucose, is the fuel that the brain uses to function. The body regulates these blood sugar levels within narrow and defined ranges in order to keep the brain working at its best. When blood sugar levels begin to drop, the individual can feel sluggish, moody and possibly depressed and anxious. This feeling of being unbalanced creates cravings that results in the individual re-using alcohol/drugs or reaching for "quick" foods that are usually refined or processed and high in sugar and fat. Caffeine and nicotine are other "quick" fixes.

Since fluctuations in blood sugar levels affect stress levels and mood, the goal is to stay balanced by eating a healthy diet at regular times. Upon awakening in the morning, blood sugar levels are at their lowest. A healthy breakfast is needed for balance.

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# EATING FOR RECOVERY

## **Break the Fast**

Your body needs energy to help you cope with the daily demands of Life. Eating food within an hour or so of waking up can be difficult. Try tiny portions to start, such as one-half cup milk or a piece of toast. If this is too much or if chewing food is a problem, try a small amount of blender drink, wait an hour or so to build up an appetite and try to eat a light, protein-based snack. Remember that it will take time to get an appetite for breakfast but eating small portions daily, while gradually increasing the quantity, can usually re-establish appetite within four to seven days.

## **Eat frequently**

Start your day by eating breakfast and then have a light meal or snack about every three to four hours after that. This provides a constant supply of energy and helps combat fatigue, tension, mood swings, hunger and cravings. You can start to develop an appetite by eating small frequent meals and snacks. Choose foods that you usually eat and enjoy to re-establish a balanced meal pattern

## **Eat a Variety of Foods**

Your body needs more than 50 different nutrients each day. Eating a variety of healthy foods from each group listed in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating will ensure that you get enough of each essential nutrient.

## **A protein Snack in the morning and Afternoon**

Include a protein food such as low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt and lean meats for your morning and afternoon snacks. Protein helps to keep energy levels stable and enhances your concentration and ability to remain alert. Eat before you feel hungry. Avoid eating protein foods in the late evening. Instead, try light-carbohydrate foods to promote calmness, relaxation and sleepiness.

## **Limit Your Intake of Caffeine**

The caffeine in coffee, tea, chocolate and colas can make you nervous and irritable, decrease your appetite, cause stomach upsets and interfere with sleep. The Average caffeine content of Beverages varies:

Filter-drip coffee (1 cup=8oz=250ml)	- 145-180mg
Instant coffee (1tsp = 5ml)	- 80-90mg
Decaffeinated coffee (1 cup=8oz=250ml)	- 5mg
Cola Drinks (1can=10oz=300mg)	- 35-50mg
Cocoa (1 cup=8oz=250ml)	- 18mg
Tea (1 cup=8oz=250ml)	- 50mg

**Remember:** caffeine is also found in headache remedies, allergy medications and weight-loss products. Try to limit your caffeine intake to a maximum of 450 milligrams per day (about three 250-milliliter cups of coffee). Avoid caffeinated beverages at least five hours before bedtime.

Tea has other positive benefits that may offset some of the negative effects of caffeine. Black and green teas are antioxidants-the disease fighters.

### **Limit Your Sugar and Sweets**

Sugar-rich foods are high in calories and low in nutrients. They may decrease your appetite for regular meals and can cause rapid rises and falls in your energy levels and leave you tired. Limiting sweets to small servings after meals can help control cravings and avoid unnecessary weight gain.

### **Cut Back on Fat**

Eating large high-fat meals can leave you feeling tired and can lead to weight gain and other health problems. To energize yourself, reduce your fat intake and increase your intake of grains, vegetables and fruits.

### **Hydrate Your Body with Water**

Drink six to eight cups of water daily to help your body flush out toxins. This will help enhance healing and recovery.

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# Anger ... Manage It Or It Will Manage You

By Richard Boyum  
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Anger is a very interesting emotion. It is much like dynamite. A little bit of it can go a long way, but used inappropriately it can backfire and blow up in your face. Anger that is not resolved or dissolved, or inappropriate levels of anger can lead to depression, a higher incident of various types of accidents, broken relationships, and can also be a major contributing factor to heart attacks and strokes in mid and later life. Keeping these thoughts in mind, consider the following thoughts and ideas to both better understand anger and to use it more appropriately.

1. Anger is often a function of frustration. Spend some time thinking about what you're really frustrated about and what actions you might be able to take to handle those frustrations.
2. Remember that, ultimately, you are responsible for your own anger. While situations may contribute to your anger, someone else doesn't make you angry; at some point you must accept responsibility for choosing anger over other emotions.
3. Speaking of emotions, anger is a basic emotion. There are things that are legitimate and appropriate to be angry about, but responses to anger do not have to be hostile or hurtful. In reality, anger is a way of protecting yourself. Spend some time thinking about what you really want to achieve in situations where you feel anger.
4. Consider to what extent your anger response is learned. Who did you learn it from? In what situations did it work for you in the past, but may not work for you in the present? Realize that for some individuals there may be a genetic predisposition to anger. In knowing this, you can make choices to keep yourself calm.
5. If you are prone to anger, rehearse appropriate and healthy responses that may be more beneficial to your situation.
6. Realize that basic, normal, human behaviors can help you effectively manage your anger. Getting appropriate exercise and making sure you get enough sleep can increase the number of choices and responses you have to situations where you may find yourself feeling upset.
7. Don not abuse alcohol and/or use other drugs. Drugs and alcohol tend to have a major effect on the rational part of your brain. When this part of your brain is anesthetized, raw emotion is more likely to take over.
8. Remember that you are not the content of your emotion; you are the invisible awareness. In other words, don't think of yourself in terms of, "I am angry ...", rather think of yourself, as, "Right now I am very aware of the anger I am feeling". When you do this, you can acknowledge your anger and somehow be a bit bigger than the feeling

itself. Through your acknowledgement, you can find a way to say, "That's just the way it is, so what choices do I have now?"

9. Remember that anger can be overt, but it also can be covert, or passive-aggressive. Passive-aggressive anger in the form of backstabbing, gossiping about individuals, or baiting others can be as serious as more direct expressions, such as yelling at someone, or confronting someone with overt threats. Either way, these behaviors can damage your long-term goals. Think carefully about how you both directly and indirectly may use anger, not to only hurt others, but also possibly hurt yourself.

10. Know that if you have a serious problem with anger, antidepressant medication and mood stabilizers/ anti seizure medications seems to help individuals gain more appropriate levels of control. You may want to talk with a physician or counselor, if you think medication may be of help to you. Usually, a single consultation should give professional enough information to help you decide whether medication is something you would like to try.

11. Finally, remember at some level, anger is a choice. At times you may want to pick other words, such as being bothered, upset, irritated. These words may help you get not only at the nature of the difficulty you have, but at possible solutions that may be of help to you.

Remember that anger is an appropriate emotion, but in our culture sometimes it is overused. Use it carefully, and it may help you achieve your goals. Misuse it, and it will create difficulties that will keep you from becoming the kind of person that you might like to be. It may be of help for you to talk with a professional counselor about ways to deal effectively with your expression of anger as an emotion. Some individuals find that anger is a mask for fear, and once they understand that important distinction, they can move forward in making more healthy choices. When you are angry, ask yourself, "Am I really afraid of something happening, or not happening?" It is normal for people to feel angry or mad, but it is also important for people to feel sad, to feel glad, and to feel afraid. Don't let anger become an emotion that blocks the healthy expression of all of the emotions you might feel. Hopefully, these thoughts and suggestions will help you further explore when anger is helping you, and/or when anger hurts you.

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<http://www.uwec.edu/counsel/pubs/boyum.htm>

# Coping With Loneliness

Author [Cathleen Henning](#)

Accepting it and moving on when the time is right

Loneliness may be painful and even frightening, and it may indicate a need for introspection. Have you been feeling lonely for a long time? Perhaps it's time to make some changes; it is possible to feel less alone. Loneliness is not a sign that you have failed or that you will never have people in your life. It may take effort to change the way you feel, but you can do it.

Accept it. There are many steps you can take to help yourself feel less alone, but before you take those steps, stop and think about how you are feeling. Loneliness is an emotion, and, as with other uncomfortable emotions, we often want to get rid of it as soon as possible. Sometimes, though, these kinds of emotions may be learning tools. Before rushing to eliminate loneliness, think about how you came to feel this way. Changes are most likely in order, but think about the changes that will suit your individual needs.

Sometimes, too, no change will eliminate loneliness. People may feel lonely even when surrounded by loving friends and family. Time may be the only solution. You are not flawed for feeling lonely, and, if you accept the feeling, you will find that it is not as uncomfortable as you first thought.

Remember, too, that being alone and feeling lonely are not the same. If you are alone these days but enjoying it, then don't feel as if you must change because other people don't understand. Do, however, be sure that you have a support system and that you are available to friends and family.

Reach out. If you had people to contact, you may be thinking, then you wouldn't be lonely. Sometimes, though, when we are immersed in loneliness, we may forget about all of our options. First, think about everyone you know and have ever known. Maybe you think a certain friend or relative wouldn't want to hear from you. Think again -- you may be surprised. Try contacting them and see what happens next. Be sure, however, to have a list of possible contacts, just in case the first doesn't go as planned. Think of old friends, too. You don't even have to tell them you're contacting them because you're lonely. Just reach out and communicate, and you'll start to feel better. Second, if you truly believe friends and family aren't an option, then reach out to people you don't know. You're already on the Internet, and your options here are endless -- from chat rooms to forums to games to pen pals.

Help someone else. A great way to spend time with people and feel good about your contribution to the world is by volunteering. If your anxiety disorder is keeping you from volunteering in a traditional way, use your imagination. Even going into an online chat room and talking to someone else who is lonely is a significant way to help. If you are

ready to volunteer outside your home, look to places that will be anxiety-friendly: church, hospitals, daycare or pre-schools, and nursing homes, are some examples.

Pursue your interests. Meet people who like to do what you like to do by becoming involved in your hobbies and interests. If you already have a hobby, such as knitting, that tends to be solitary, look for local classes or groups where you can meet other people as well as learn more about your craft. If you've thought about an interest for a long time but have never followed through, consider starting now. Look at your local newspaper for classes, groups and meetings, if you need ideas. Take a nature walk. Attend a lecture at a local museum. Take a cooking class. If you're not sure what your interests are, just start participating until you find what you love.

Join -- or start -- a support group. Look around for a support group. Ask your therapist, check the local newspaper, and contact local hospitals. If there aren't any for anxiety, try a depression group. Consider starting your own support group if you can't find one; you'll be helping yourself and other people. If you need a place to have meetings, contact local churches, which often have space.

If you're not sure how to cope with your loneliness and you feel that it's making you depressed, talk to your therapist about it (or get a therapist if you don't have one). Talking about it may help you explore other issues or come up with unique ways to cope with your individual feelings.

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# 10 TIPS FOR HEALTHY SLEEP

1. *Keep a regular sleep schedule.* Our sleep-wake cycle is regulated by a rhythm in our brain and the body's needs to balance both sleep time and wake time. That is also why it is important to keep a regular bedtime and wake-time, even on the weekends when there is the temptation to sleep-in. Individuals should not alter their sleep routines by more than 1 hr.

2. *Avoid caffeine.* Caffeine is a stimulant, which means it can produce an alerting effect. Depending on the dose, caffeine products, such as coffee, tea, colas and chocolate, remain in the body on average from 3 to 5 hours, but they can affect some people up to 12 hours later. Even if you do not think caffeine affects you, it may be disrupting and changing the quality of your sleep. Avoiding caffeine within 6-8 hours of going to bed can help improve sleep. Reduced caffeine can result in more restful sleep.

3. *Avoid nicotine.* Nicotine is also a stimulant. Smoking before bed makes it more difficult to fall asleep. When smokers go to sleep, they experience withdrawal symptoms from nicotine, which can cause fitful sleep. Nicotine can cause difficulty falling asleep, problems waking in the morning, and may also cause nightmares. Difficulty sleeping is just one more reason to quit smoking.

4. *Avoid alcohol.* Although many people think of alcohol as a sleep aid because of its sedating effect, it actually disrupts sleep, causing nighttime awakenings. Consuming alcohol leads to a night of less restful sleep. Nix the nightcap.

5. *Don't eat or drink too much close to bedtime.* Eating or drinking too much may make you less comfortable when settling down for bed. It is best to avoid a heavy meal too close to bedtime. Also, spicy foods may cause heartburn, which leads to difficulty falling asleep and discomfort during the night. Try to restrict fluids close to bedtime to prevent nighttime awakenings to go to the bathroom, though some people find milk or herbal, non-caffeinated teas to be soothing and a helpful part of a bedtime routine. If you are going to eat, carbohydrates like breads and cereal may help to relax the body.

6. *Exercise at the right time promotes sleep.* Exercising regularly makes it easier to fall asleep and contributes to sounder sleep. However, exercising sporadically or right before going to bed will make falling asleep more difficult. In addition to making us more alert, our body temperature rises during exercise, and takes up to 6 hours to begin to drop. A cooler body temperature provides the signal that it is time to sleep. Finish your exercise at least 3 hours before bedtime. Late afternoon exercise is the perfect way to help you fall asleep at night.

7. *Use relaxing bedtime rituals/routines.* A relaxing, routine activity right before bedtime conducted away from bright lights sends a signal to your body that it is almost time to go to sleep and will make it easier to fall asleep. Avoid arousing activities before bedtime like working, paying bills, engaging in competitive games or family problem-solving

activities. Try an activity that is relaxing, such as soaking in a hot tub, reading or listening to music, or having a massage. Some studies suggest that soaking in hot water (such as a hot tub or bath) before retiring to bed can ease the transition into deeper sleep, but it should be done early enough that you are no longer sweating or over-heated. If you are unable to avoid tension and stress, it may be helpful to learn relaxation therapy from a trained professional.

8. *Create a sleep-promoting environment.* Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep – cool, quiet, dark, comfortable and free of interruptions. Also make your bedroom reflective of the value you place on sleep. Check your room for noise or other distractions, including a bed partner's sleep disruptions such as snoring, light, and a dry or hot environment. Consider using blackout curtains, eyeshades, earplugs, "white noise" (fan), humidifiers and other devices. Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive. Have comfortable pillows and make the room attractive and inviting for sleep, but also free of allergens that might affect you and objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night.

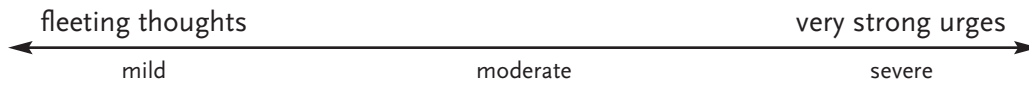
9. *Associate your bed with sleep only.* Use your bed only for sleep to strengthen the association between bed and sleep. If you associate a particular activity or item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine. For example, if looking at a bedroom clock makes you anxious about how much time you have before you must get up, move the clock out of sight. Do not engage in activities that cause you anxiety and prevent you from sleeping, i.e.: homework, bill payment, and workouts.

10. *Limit sleep time in bed.* If you do not fall asleep within 15-20 minutes of going to bed and turning out the lights, it is best to get out of bed and do another relaxing activity until you are feeling sleepy again. If anxiety about something you need to do prevents you from sleeping, it is sometimes helpful to jot down notes in a "worry" or "to do" book. Nap during the day only when needed to maintain alertness and plan on napping 20-30 minutes.

\* Material Adapted from numerous freeware sources

## Coping with Cravings

Quitting drinking or other drug use is likely to lead to cravings, especially in high-risk situations. Learning to deal with urges and temptations is a very important part of preventing relapse. We experience urges to use at different levels of intensity, which can be viewed as being on a continuum, as illustrated below.



We can decrease cravings for alcohol and other drugs by using specific coping strategies. Remember that cravings do not last forever and will decrease in number and strength over time.

Try some of the following suggestions to help you cope:

Behaviour (What I Do)	Cognition (What I Think)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-monitor: Write out your thoughts and feelings.</li> <li>• Seek support: Tell someone what you are experiencing.</li> <li>• Distract yourself: Do something unrelated to substance use.</li> <li>• Substitute another behaviour (e.g., eat something or drink a non-alcoholic beverage).</li> <li>• Leave the situation, or do something to change it.</li> <li>• Take deep breaths (in through your nose, out through your mouth) to relax yourself.</li> <li>• Delay the response: Put off the decision to drink or use other drugs for 15 minutes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalize the craving: “I am experiencing an urge to drink/use drugs. It is OK to feel like using.”</li> <li>• Use imagery (e.g., visualize the craving as a wave that rises and falls, with you riding it out).</li> <li>• Use positive self-statements (e.g., “I can cope with it,” or “I have been clean for two weeks and I don’t want to spoil it now.”)</li> <li>• Use thought stopping (e.g., picture a STOP sign).</li> <li>• Think of the negative consequences of using alcohol or other drugs.</li> <li>• Think of the benefits of not using alcohol or other drugs.</li> </ul>

**PRACTICE EXERCISE**

Now, come up with your own plan to deal with urges and temptations to use. Be specific.

Describe a recent high-risk situation you experienced that resulted in a craving.

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Using your example above, plan ways to deal with urges and temptations to use in a similar future situation.

Whom are you going to seek support from?

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What will you do to distract yourself?

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What messages (positive self-talk) will you give yourself?

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What else can you do in this situation?

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## **Dealing with Cravings: The Four Steps, Plus One** (Adapted from *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* by Gabor Maté)

These four steps should be practiced whenever you have a craving – even daily. Find a quiet place to write. You might want to carry a notepad with you at all times to help with the process.

### **Step One: Relabel**

When we relabel, we give up the language of need. I say to myself, “I don’t *need* to have a drink right now; I’m only having a craving. It’s not a real need but a false belief. I may have a feeling of urgency, but there is actually nothing urgent going on.”

Be aware of the sense of urgency that has taken hold and relabel it as a part of addiction rather than reality. **The point of relabeling is not to make the craving disappear – it’s not going to, at least not for a long time, since it was wired into the brain long ago.** Paying attention to the urge and the relabeling can rewire the brain.

### **Step Two: Reattribute**

In Reattribute you learn to blame your brain. “This is my brain sending me a false message.” In this step you see where the craving is coming from. “Because they are wired into my brain and because they are easily triggered whenever I’m stressed or tired or unhappy or bored.” The urge says nothing about you as a person; it’s not a character weakness. You can take responsibility now.

### **Step Three: Refocus**

In the Refocus step you buy yourself time. Although the craving to have a drink, drive to the casino or smoke some dope is powerful, it’s only temporary. It will pass and you have to give it time to pass. **It’s not how you feel; it’s what you do that counts.** It’s not about having “free will”, it’s about having “free won’t”.

Rather than giving into the craving, find something else to do. Your first goal can be small: buy yourself just fifteen minutes. Be sure to find something to do that you enjoy. Physical activity is often helpful.

**The purpose of Refocus is to teach your brain that it doesn't have to obey the craving. It can exercise the "free won't." It can choose something else.**

If you cannot hold out for the fifteen minutes that's okay. Make it five minutes and record it in your journal as a success. This is not a race you have to win, but a marathon you are training for.

#### **Step Four: Revalue**

This step could also be called Devalue. Its purpose is to help you see just what has been the real impact of the addiction in your life: disaster.

The addictive mind has been fooled into making the object of your craving (alcohol, drugs or gambling) most important. In the Revalue step you see your craving for what its worth: worse than nothing. "What has this craving done for me?" you ask. It has caused me to spend money, to be away from the ones I love, to do things that I later regretted. It has wasted my time. It has made me lie and cheat and to pretend to myself and everyone close to me.

Be aware as you write this out – and write it out several times a day if necessary. Be specific: what has been the value of the urge in your life? What happened yesterday when you allowed the urge to rule you? What happened last week? Will it happen today? Pay attention to what you feel when you remember these events. Be aware. That awareness will be your guide.

#### **Step Five: Re-create**

Life up until now has created you. You've been acting on messages wired into your brain. It is time to re-create: to choose a different life. You have values. You have passions. You have goals, talents and strengths. In your heart there is love and you want to connect that with the love in the world, in the universe. As you relabel, reattribute, refocus and revalue you are releasing patterns that have hurt you. Instead of using alcohol, drugs or gambling to try to soothe yourself, feel love or escape pain: what is the life you really want? What do you choose to create?

Write down your values and goals. See yourself living with integrity, being able to look people in the eye with compassion for them and for yourself. Re-create. Are you afraid you will stumble? Of course you will: that's called being a human being. And then you will take four steps-plus one-again.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Our bodies respond automatically to stressful situations and thoughts by becoming tense. The opposite relationship also works: a good way of relaxing the mind is to deliberately relax the body.

In a progressive muscle relaxation each muscle group is tensed in turn, and the tension is then released. This relaxes the muscles and allows you to notice the contrast between tension and relaxation.

Relaxation should be enjoyable so if any part of the exercise is too difficult skip it for the moment. If you have any injuries you may wish to leave out that part of the exercise.

### Preparation

Lie down flat on your back, on a firm bed, a couch, or on the floor. Support your head and neck with a pillow or cushion. Alternatively sit in a comfortable chair with your head well-supported. Close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so.

### Instructions

Focus your attention on different parts of your body in sequence. Go through the sequence three times:

- 1) *Tense & release: Tense that body part, hold it for a few moments, then relax*
- 2) *Lightly tense & release: Tense that body part with just enough tension to notice, then relax*
- 3) *Release only: Just pay attention to each muscle group and decide to relax it*

### Recommended sequence

- 1 Right hand & arm  
(clench the fist & tighten the muscles in the arm)
- 2 Left hand & arm
- 3 Right leg  
(tense the leg, lifting the knee slightly)
- 4 Left leg
- 5 Stomach & chest
- 6 Back muscles  
(pull the shoulders back slightly)
- 7 Neck & throat  
(push the head back slightly into the pillow/surface)
- 8 Face  
(scrunch up the muscles in your face)

