

The "STOP!" Technique

Feelings of stress are often reflected by increased muscular tension e.g. in the face, shoulders, hands. By deliberately relaxing muscles, it is possible to halt and reverse this process of increasing tension and stress. The STOP! Technique is a quick and effective way of doing so. Its aim is not to achieve complete relaxation, but to reduce unhelpful tension to a manageable level. The technique takes less than a minute and can usually be done without other people noticing.

- Say **STOP!** to yourself (out loud if the situation permits)
- Breathe in gently
- Breathe out slowly, relaxing SHOULDERS, ARMS AND HANDS
- Pause
- Breathe in again
- Breathe out slowly, relaxing FOREHEAD AND JAW
- Stay quiet for a few seconds
- Carry on with whatever you were doing, deliberately moving more slowly. If you have to talk, speak a little more slowly and with your voice a little lower than usual.
- You'll find that in spite of your feelings, the tension will lessen.