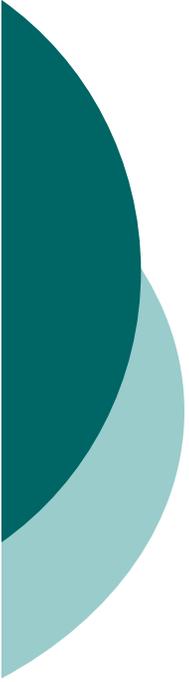


Relaxation for people with disabilities

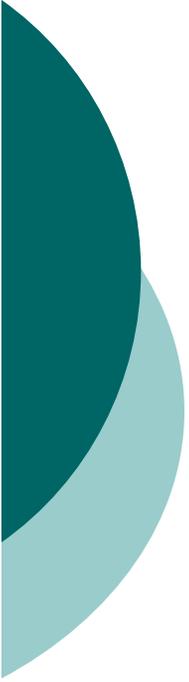
Dr Nick Hagiliassis
Psychology Advisor - Scope





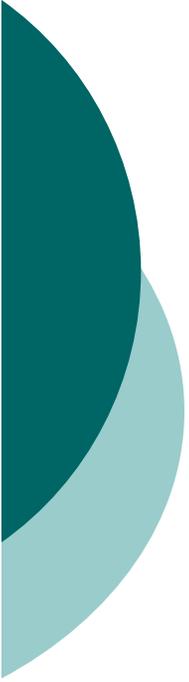
Stress

- Stress is the physiological and emotional reaction to psychological events.
- "Fight or flight" response.
- Not all stress is bad.



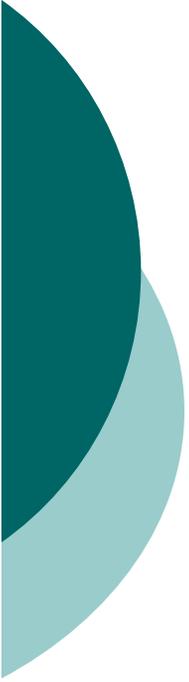
Relaxation

- Relaxation involves a distinct physiological state that is the distinct opposite of the way your body feels and reacts under stress and tension.
- Relaxation is incompatible with stress.
- The physiological responses found in the state of relaxation are the opposite of those found in the fight or flight response.
 - Heart rate and blood pressure drop
 - Breathing rate decreases
 - Muscle tension decreases



Relaxation

- Being able to relax results from applying specific skills.
- Can be used for:
 - Treatment of specific physical conditions (e.g., muscle tension, muscle spasms, neck and back pain, high blood pressure)
 - As a focussed psychological strategy for the treatment of anxiety, depression, insomnia and mild phobias.
 - Day-to-day situations.
 - **One** component of a behavioural support program.



Types of relaxation

- Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)
 - involves tensing and relaxing muscle groups
- Visualisation or guided imagery
 - involves asking an individual to imagine, for example, a peaceful scene
- Focussed breathing
 - increasing one's awareness and control of breathing patterns.
- Autogenics
 - listening to positive self-statements and affirmations, such as "my breathing is smooth and rhythmical" and "I am in control".
- Ti Chi, Yoga, Meditation, Self-hypnosis



Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)

- Developed by Jacobson in the early 1920s.
- Anxiety manifests itself through tension in the muscles; if one can reduce the muscular response, then one can also reduce the experience of stress as well.
- Tightening and relaxing various muscle groups throughout the body, slowly, one at a time.
- Relaxation sequence is:
 1. Tense the muscles
 2. Notice the feeling in all the muscles that are tight
 3. Relax
 4. Enjoy the pleasant feeling



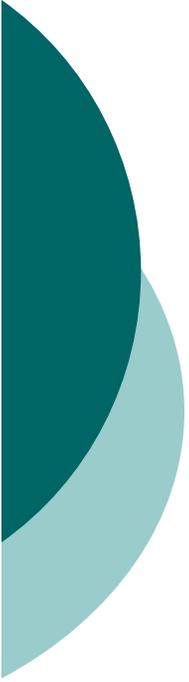
Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)

- Preparing for PMR
 - Assume a comfortable position
 - Loosen any tight clothing
 - Give yourself permission to relax
 - Assume a passive, detached attitude
 - Make sure not to over contract
 - Avoid areas of recent injury



Guided Imagery (visualisation)

- The central theme involves working with imaginary sensations, not just visual, but auditory, feelings, smell, and taste.
- Our body responds to the image as though it is the real thing.
- The more sensory modalities included in the experience, the stronger the response.



Controlled breathing

- Take a slow deep breath in for 3 seconds through your nose, and then let that breath out for 3 seconds through your mouth.
- Focus your mind on your breathing and repeat the word "relax" quietly to yourself every time you breathe out.
- Let your breathing flow smoothly.
- Imagine the tension flowing out of your body each time you breathe out.
- Continue this way for about 5 minutes.

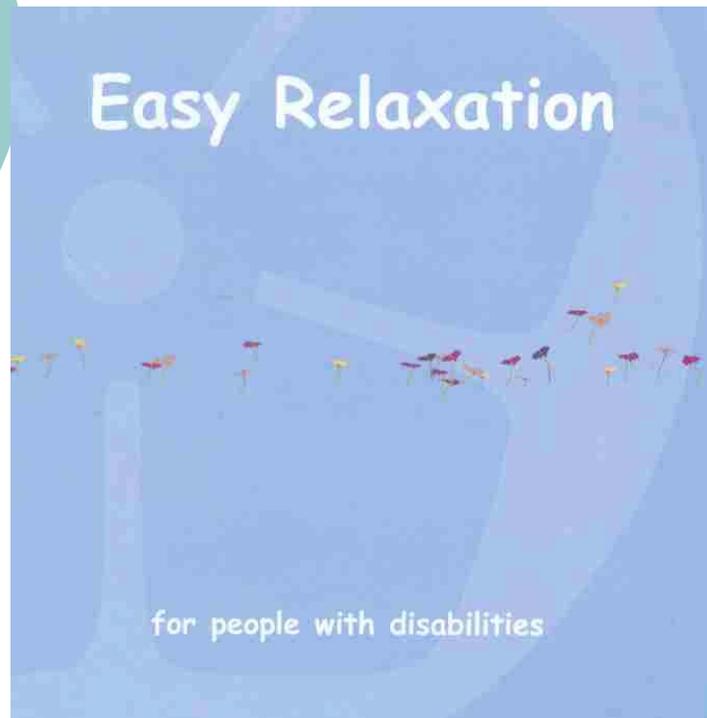


Relaxation and disability

- Disability is not necessarily a barrier to benefiting from relaxation
- Relaxation techniques in their traditional form may require modification

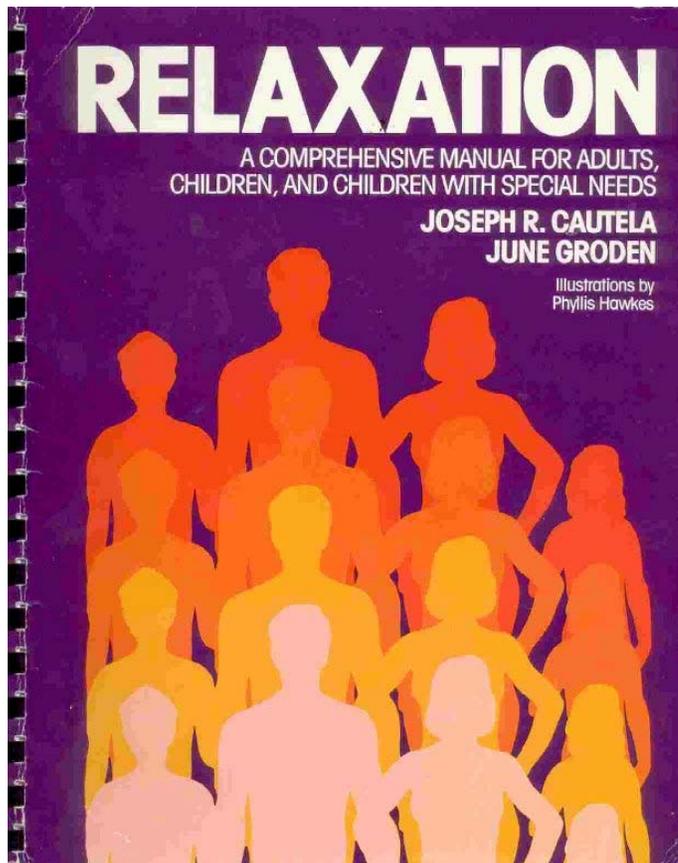
<i>Technique</i>	<i>Challenges</i>
PMR requires people to tense their muscles and then relax them	Tensing muscles may be difficult for a person with a physical disability.
Visualisation involves abstract mental processes or an understanding of complex internal states such as 'tension' and 'relaxation'	May be a challenge for some people with learning difficulties.

Resources designed specifically for people with disabilities



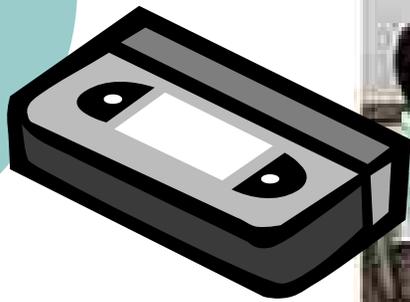
- **Easy relaxation CD**
Scope
- Incorporates aspects of focussed breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and autogenics.
- Modifications to these techniques have been made to ensure they are appropriate for many individuals with physical, learning and multiple disabilities.
- Physical demands of the relaxation are relatively simple
- Uses concrete and easy to follow language

Resources designed specifically for people with disabilities



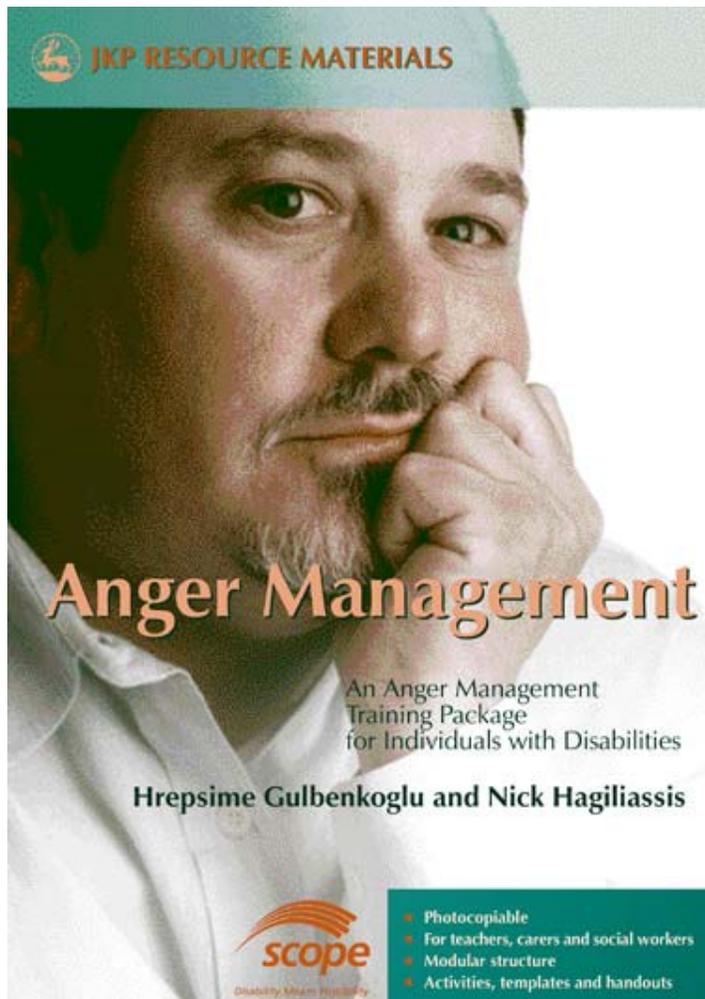
- **Relaxation: A Comprehensive Manual for Adults, Children, and Children with Special Needs** Dr. Joseph R. Cautela and Dr. June Groden
- Presents
 - self-relaxation techniques designed for adults,
 - methods for teaching relaxation to adults and older children,
 - procedures for teaching relaxation to people with developmental disabilities.

Resources designed specifically for people with disabilities



- **Relaxation Techniques for People with Special Needs Breaking the Barriers** Dr. June Groden, Dr. Joseph R. Cautela, and Dr. Gerald Groden
- Video
- Demonstrates the use of special relaxation procedures with children and adolescents who have developmental disabilities.

Resources designed specifically for people with disabilities

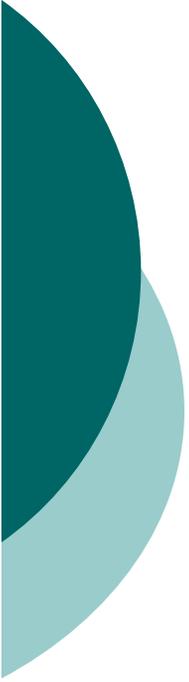


- **Anger Management: An Anger Management Training Package for Individuals with Disabilities** Hrepsime Gulbenkoglu and Nick Hagiliassis
- The training program consists of 12 fully-scripted sessions dealing with topics such as recognising feelings of anger, **learning to relax** and think calmly, and being assertive and handling problems competently



General relaxation resources

- Wide range of self help books, audio cassettes, CDs
- Remember that different procedures are often necessary to produce the same effect in different people
- Specialist book stores



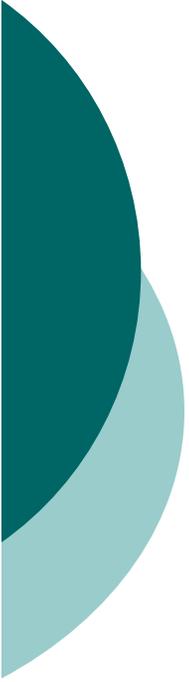
Developing your own resources

- Develop a relaxation script, or identify one that you can use as a template.
- Web-based scripts:
 - PMR technique for children
 - <http://www.yourfamilyclinic.com/>
 - <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/>
 - Guided imagery/visualisation
 - <http://caregiver-information.com/>
 - <http://www.infinitefutures.com/>
 - PMR technique
 - <http://caregiver-information.com/>
 - <http://www.tenzone.u-net.com/>
 - PMR technique with audio
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/>
 - <http://www.cwgsy.net/>



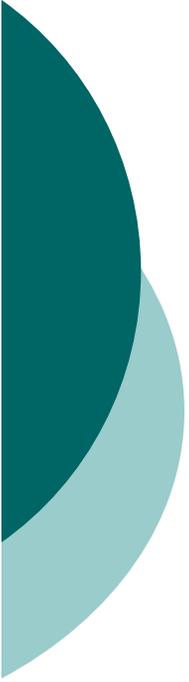
Developing your own resources

- Keep it simple:
- Example of a simplified PMR exercise:
 - Now its time to start your relaxation. Breathe comfortably, slow and easy. Let's relax your muscles. Relax your (face, shoulders, arms, stomach, legs). Notice how relaxed your (face, shoulders, arms, stomach, legs) feel/s. Relaxing your muscles leaves you feeling so calm.
- Example of a simplified visualisation exercise:
 - Picture yourself at the beach. The rays of the sun are soft and warm. You hear the sounds of the seagulls and the waves rolling gently. The waves roll in and out, in and out. Each wave makes you feel more and more relaxed. You can see the sand, and the waves, and the blue sky. You can feel the cool salt air. You take deep breaths of the air and with each breath, you feel more and more relaxed. You feel safe and calm.



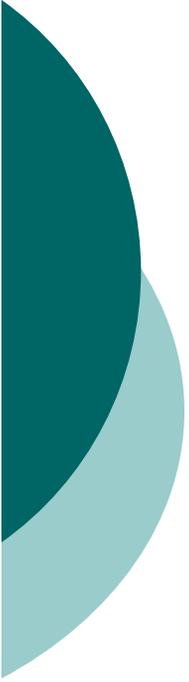
Developing your own resources

- Make your own relaxation tape using one of the scripts from these WebPages
- Add relaxing background music or sounds
- Music should not be rhythmic
- When recording, speak slowly into the tape, leaving long pauses between sentences
- May need 2 or 3 attempts to perfect the timing



Techniques in overcoming difficulties in learning to relax (Cautela & Groden)

- Positioning;
 - some people (e.g., people whose physical disability means that limbs and trunk are stiffly extended) respond better to being supported to lie on their stomach.
 - If a person has a predominance of flexion (bending) of the limbs or trunk, he or she may benefit from being placed on their back
 - Sitting comfortably in a chair with a tray on which to rest elbows or forearms may also help.
 - When sitting, feet should be flat on the floor, or on footrests if using a wheelchair.
 - Positioning in a beanbag can facilitate relaxation.



Techniques in overcoming difficulties in learning to relax (Cautela & Groden)

- Fast, unexpected moves or touching can lead to a startle response and increase muscle tightness; gentle but firm touch should be used. If a part must be moved, it should be moved slowly, letting muscle tightness relax slowly.
- Keep outside stimulation and distractors to a minimum.
- Facilitator's voice should be kept soft when giving instructions.
- Gentle "shaking" of the limb while asking for "relax" can help reduce muscle tension
- When using physical prompting techniques, decrease this tension as the person relaxes.
- Gentle stroking over the limb you wish to relax can help reduce tension.



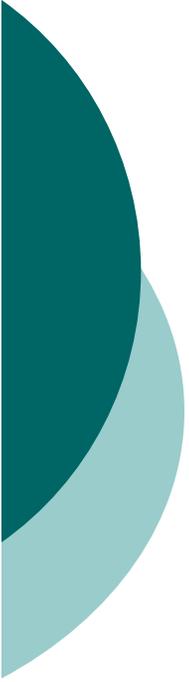
Techniques in overcoming difficulties in learning to relax (Cautela & Groden)

- Modelling procedures may be necessary.
- At times, prerequisite skills may need to be taught.
- Chose an environment that is conducive to relaxation; this will differ across individuals (e.g., individual rooms, areas with room dividers, in a corner of the room, outside).
- Consult relevant professionals, such as physiotherapists, psychologists, occupational therapists, or medical practitioners.
- ***Remember - where unsure - seek advice***



Ethical and clinical issues in the use of relaxation with people with disabilities

- Make sure there is a clear purpose to using relaxation - don't use relaxation just for the sake of it or indiscriminately.
- Make sure relaxation is not 'overused' for any particular individual.
- While relaxation can be used as a strategy in itself, be aware that some situations may call for a more coordinated and multi-modal intervention.



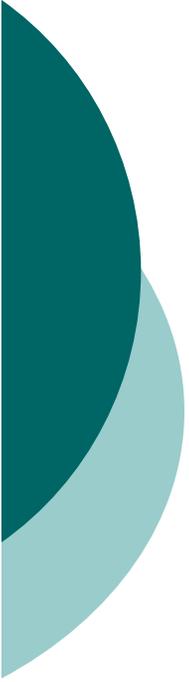
Ethical and clinical issues in the use of relaxation with people with disabilities

- Be aware that different people respond best to different types of relaxation methods.
- Don't assume that relaxation will be effective as a stress reduction technique for everyone.
- Relaxation methods need to be used extra carefully with certain groups of individuals, such as those with specific medical conditions that impact on breathing (e.g., asthma) or that require special positioning of the neck or body, as well as some psychiatric conditions (e.g., specific forms of depression or psychosis). Seek advice.



Ethical and clinical issues in the use of relaxation with people with disabilities

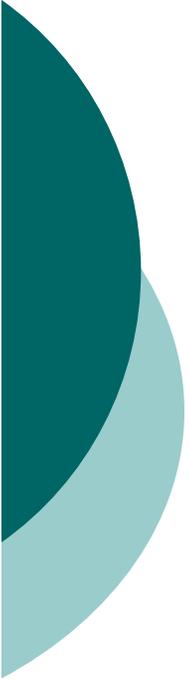
- Like any other intervention, informed consent needs to be established prior to the commencement of that intervention.
- Deep states of relaxation can sometimes cause our normal emotional defences to drop.
- Some people may become anxious as they relax.
- Relaxation may increase the body's sensitivity to medication



Other considerations for use of relaxation

- Frequency of session: Try to establish a regular time to practice and practice at least 4-5 times a week.
- Time of session: Try to practice the same time each day to establish regular rhythm.
- Duration of a session: Start with fairly short practice sessions and build to longer practice times.
- Choose an appropriate setting e.g., minimal distractors or interruptions.
- Preparation: All restrictive clothing should be loosened or removed prior to practice.

<http://www.wvu.edu/chw/counseling/subpages/relaxinstruct.shtml>



Other considerations for use of relaxation

- Posture: you should be in a posture which allows your muscles to relax.
- Passive concentration: take a non-judgmental, non-critical approach to the task.
- Ending your practice session: Gradually bring yourself out of the session by attending to your breathing and becoming aware of where you are. Stretch your arms and legs, and move a little before you attempt to stand.



Contact details

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