

The Intelligent Response

Performing the following exercise once a day for even a few weeks can enable mastery of calmness. This particular exercise is a blend of a breathing exercise, progressive muscular relaxation, autogenic training, guided imagery, and self-hypnosis. When you are ready to perform this exercise, choose a time when you will be undisturbed for 30 minutes. Begin by making a printout of this exercise so you have a written copy. As you slowly read through the exercise, pause and perform each instruction as you read it. Go at your own pace, and then mark your place with your fingertip as you read and move through the exercise so you will always know where you are.

You can continue to practice this exercise from your written copy, or you could: 1) have someone else read the exercise for you, or 2) read this exercise into an audio recording device, and then play the audio recording as you practice the *intelligent response*. If you decide to make a recording, you will want to practice the exercise a few times by reading it aloud. This will give the sense of pace that will work best when you make your audio recording.

However, it is OK to do the exercise in anyway that suits you. It really doesn't matter. You may also mix and match the different techniques. You may like to buy some ready-made relaxation tapes or CDs (Google-ing "Jon Kabat-Zinn" is an excellent starting place). You might like to take a stress management class. Or, sign up for Yoga. It may be of great benefit to see a psychologist for a few sessions of relaxation training, or to work with a biofeedback therapist for awhile. All paths that lead to profound physical relaxation and deep calmness will enable the *intelligent response* – a powerful alternative to our automatic fight or flight response.

Practice makes perfect. Mastery of calmness is the most powerful skill you can acquire. It is both life changing and life enabling. In some ways using a printed copy is best. It allows you to modify the exercise at will. You can stop to focus, or repeat as you need. Very soon you will have memorized all the words anyway. Then you can do your practice from memory.

There are no hard rules in mastering relaxation. You can go a little slower or a little faster as you like. It really doesn't matter. You can pause to focus on any instruction. You can repeat any instruction once, twice or three times. It really doesn't matter. Your goal is profound physical relaxation and deep emotional calmness. You will know you are being successful when you feel the muscles of your body relaxing, and when you feel deeply calm. If any part of the exercise seems not to be working, slow down and repeat the instruction.

When you are ready to begin.

•**Get comfortable:**

Find a comfortable position. You may sit, or lie down as you prefer. Take your time getting comfortable. Move your body until you find the best position. There is lots of time. When you are physically comfortable move on.

•**Calm your breathing:**

Take a deep breath,
Hold it for a moment, comfortably, then,
Let it all the way out.

When you are ready, take another deep breath.
Hold it a little longer, when you are ready,
Let it out slowly, thinking:

“I am completely calm. I am completely relaxed.”

(repeat as desired)

Focus on your breathing ...

Cool fresh air, coming in, bringing energy with each breath ...
Warmed used air, going out, carrying away tensions and stresses ...

In ...
Out ...

In ...
Out ...

In ...
Out ...

Cool fresh air, coming in, bringing energy with each breath ...
Warmed used air, going out, carrying away tensions and stresses ...

(repeat as desired)

As you breathe allow your body to become calm and at peace. Notice how your body moves as you breathe. Abdominal breathing as opposed to chest breathing is much more calming. (Google “abdominal breathing” or “diaphragmatic breathing” if you like.)

Your abdomen rises and falls, like a boat floating on a calm sea ...

Rises ...

Falls ...

Rises ...

Falls ...

Rises ...

Falls ...

Rising and falling like a boat floating on a calm sea.

(repeat as desired)

Take a deep breath. ...

Hold it as long as you can, comfortably, then

Slowly let it all the way out.

Take a another deep breath. ...

Hold it as long as you can, comfortably, then

Slowly let it all the way out, thinking:

“I am completely calm. I feel deeply relaxed as if there’s lots of time.”

Take a another deep breath. ...

Hold it as long as you can, comfortably, then

Slowly let it all the way out, thinking:

“I am completely calm. I feel deeply relaxed as if there’s lots of time.”

(repeat as desired)

•Relax your body

Take extra time to relax any area of your body that is uncomfortable. You should slow the exercise whenever you encounter any area of your body that is ill or injured. When focusing on your extremities, you can begin by doing the right side, and then repeat for the left side, or you do both sides at the same time. It really doesn't matter. Focus on your body. Begin at your toes and move upwards.

I relax my toes. I relax the muscles of my toes. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my toes.

I relax my feet. I relax the muscles of my feet. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my feet.

I relax my ankles. I relax the muscles of my ankles. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my ankles.

I relax my legs. I relax the muscles of my legs. My shins. My calves. All parts of my legs. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my legs.

I relax my knees. I relax the muscles around my knees. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my knees.

I relax my upper legs, my thighs, front and back. I relax the muscles of my hips. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my upper legs.

(repeat as desired)

I relax my sex. I relax the muscles of my sex. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my sex.

I relax my abdomen. I relax the muscles of my abdomen. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my abdomen. I relax the internal organs of my abdomen. I relax my stomach, my intestine, my colon, my liver and spleen. I relax my kidneys and bladder, and all the organs of my abdomen. I relax deeply.

(repeat as desired)

I relax my lower back, my buttocks, my tailbone. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my back.

I relax my middle back. I relax the muscles of my mid back. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my back.

I relax my upper back — between my shoulder blades — my lower neck and the muscles of my shoulders. I relax the muscles of my upper back. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my back.

(repeat as desired)

I relax my chest. I relax the muscles of my chest. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax the internal organs of my chest. I relax my heart. Imagining it as it beats regularly and strong. I relax my lungs. Imagining as they breathe fully and comfortably. Take a deep breath. Hold it as long as you can comfortably, then let it all the way out. Thinking I am completely calm. I am completely relaxed.

(repeat as desired)

I relax my shoulders and my upper arms, my biceps and triceps. I relax the muscles of my upper arms. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my shoulders and upper arms.

I relax my elbows. I relax the muscles about my elbows. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my elbows.

I relax my forearms and wrists. I relax the muscles of my forearms and wrists. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my forearms and wrists.

I relax my hands and fingers. I relax the muscles of my hands and fingers. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my hands and fingers.

I relax from the tips of my fingers to the depth of my shoulders.

(repeat as desired)

I relax neck and head. I relax the muscles of my neck and head. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my neck and head.

I relax my face, my eyes, my forehead, my nose and nasal passages, I relax my mouth, my lips, and my tongue. I relax all the muscles of my face. I imagine the muscles as they stretch and relax as they become soft and supple. I relax my face.

(repeat as desired)

Now search your entire body for any knots of tension or areas of incomplete relaxation. When you find them simply let them go. As you let the tensions go, think: “I am completely calm. I feel deeply relaxed as if there’s lots of time.”

Take a deep breath. ... Hold it as long as you can, comfortably, then slowly let it all the way out, thinking: “I am completely calm. I feel deeply relaxed as if there’s lots of time.”

Take a deep breath. ... Hold it as long as you can, comfortably, then slowly let it all the way out, thinking: “I am completely calm. I feel deeply relaxed as if there’s lots of time.”

(repeat as desired)

•Deepening my relaxation with the feeling of heaviness

I focus on my right arm. My right arm grows heavy — so very heavy. My right arm feels more and more heavy as if my arm was made of lead. As my arm grows heavy I relax deeply.

I focus on my left arm. My left arm grows heavy — so very heavy. My left arm feels more and more heavy as if my arm was made of lead. As my arm grows heavy I relax deeply.

I focus on my right leg. My right leg grows heavy — so very heavy. My right leg feels more and more heavy as if my leg was made of lead. As my leg grows heavy I relax deeply.

I focus on my left leg. My left leg grows heavy — so very heavy. My left leg feels more and more heavy as if my leg was made of lead. As my leg grows heavy I relax deeply.

I focus on my body. My body grows heavy — so very heavy. My body feels more and more heavy as if my body were made of lead. As my body grows heavy I relax deeply.

I am feeling heavy, so very, very heavy. I am feeling calm, so very, very calm. I am feeling relaxed, so very, very relaxed.

(repeat as desired)

•Deepening my relaxation with the feeling of warmth

I focus on my right arm. My right arm grows warm — so very warm. My right arm feels more and more warm as if my arm was resting in the warm sunshine. As my arm grows warm, I relax deeply.

I focus on my left arm. My left arm grows warm — so very warm. My left arm feels more and more warm as if my arm was resting in the warm sunshine. As my arm grows warm, I relax deeply.

I focus on my right leg. My right leg grows warm — so very warm. My right leg feels more and more warm as if my leg was resting in the warm sunshine. As my leg grows warm, I relax deeply.

I focus on my left leg. My left leg grows warm — so very warm. My left leg feels more and more warm as if my leg was resting in the warm sunshine. As my leg grows warm, I relax deeply.

I focus on my body. My body grows warm — so very warm. My body feels more and more warm as if my body was resting in the warm sunshine. As my body grows warm, I relax deeply.

I am feeling warm, so very, very warm. I am feeling calm, so very, very calm. I am feeling relaxed, so very, very relaxed.

(repeat as desired)

•What is anchoring?

You can create a trigger to access the state of deep calmness, instantly, whenever need it. This is accomplished through a process called *anchoring*. You know how a certain smell or picture can bring back pleasant memories. Or how an old song can invoke a feeling of nostalgia or romance? The smell, picture or song is *anchored* to a certain feeling. Hearing the song acts as a trigger for recalling the feeling when you first heard that song.

You are going to create such an *anchor* — using touch — for returning instantly to the deep feeling of calmness. This will be your trigger for activating the *intelligent response*.

The most common technique for anchoring is to simply touch the tips of your index finger with your thumb making a circle. This is common hand position used in meditation. If you prefer, you can touch three fingers together—your index and middle finger with your thumb.

You can create your own *anchor* if you like. Some people prefer to grip one of their wrists with the other hand. Others touch the tip of their tongue to the area in their mouth where their teeth meet their upper palate.

Words and phrases also make good anchors, my favorite is:

Relax ... Lots of time

When using words or phrases as anchors, I like to draw them out. Starting with a deep breath, which I hold for a moment, then saying them slowly:

“Reeeeeeeelaaaaax Lots ... of ... Time”

You can have one or more *anchors*; the more you have, the better. The more you practice the better it will work. The more you *anchor* in your triggers the stronger they become. This process is called ‘stacking *anchors*’.

You can use touch your 2 fingers together at anytime during the day to trigger the *anchor*. If you want to relax, just touch your 2 fingers together take a deep breath and say to yourself *relax*. You are free to chose any of these suggested *anchors* or create your own. It really doesn’t matter. You simply want to tie a physical sensation into your experience of deep calmness.

•Anchoring the intelligent response

Like the *intelligent response* creating an effective *anchor* requires practice. When you have achieved a deep state of calmness and relaxation is the best time to practice your *anchor*. To activate an *anchor*, you want to focus on your feelings of deep calmness and profound relaxation while performing your *anchor*. With continued practice, you will discover that you can access the *intelligent response* in any situation by simply applying your *anchor*. Now let's practice.

Take a deep breath. Hold it as long as you can comfortably. Let it out slowly thinking: "I am completely calm. I feel deeply relaxed as if there's lots of time."

Take a deep breath. Apply your *anchor*. Feel the pressure between the tip of your index finger and your thumb. Now focus on the sensation of your *anchor* thinking: "Whenever I feel my anchor, I will feel deeply and completely calm and relaxed. ... When I am calm, I am strong."

Continue to focus on the sensation of your *anchor*. Take a deep breath. Hold it as long as you can comfortably. Let it out slowly thinking: "When I am calm, I am strong. When I am calm, I can solve any problem."

Take a deep breath. Hold it as long as you can comfortably. Let it out slowly thinking: "I am completely calm. I feel deeply relaxed as if there's lots of time."

Apply your *anchor*, and focus on the sensation of your *anchor* thinking: "Whenever I feel my *anchor*, I will feel deeply calm and completely relaxed. When I am calm, I am strong."

Continue to focus on the sensation of your *anchor*. Take a deep breath. Hold it as long as you can comfortably. Let it out slowly thinking: "When I am calm, I am strong. When I am calm, I can solve any problem."

In the future, whenever I am confronted with any stressor, any difficult situation, I will remember the power of calmness. I will apply my *anchor* and feel instantly calm. I will feel instantly relaxed. I will always remember: "When I am calm, I am strong. When I am calm, I can solve any problem."

Take a deep breath. Hold it as long as you can comfortably. Let it out slowly thinking: "When I am calm, I am strong. When I am calm, I can solve any problem."

(repeat as desired)

- **Rehearsing for future stressors**

Now imagine some real problem that is going on in your life today. But as you imagine this problem feel calm and relaxed while thinking: “Anger will not help me, fear will not help me. Only calmness can help me. I will be calm and strong.”

Take a deep breath. Hold it comfortably. When you are ready exhale thinking: “When I am calm, I can think clearly. When I am calm, I can think well. When I am calm, I am fully intelligent.”

As the images and thoughts about your problem come into your mind simply watch them from this detached perspective of calmness and deep relaxation. Imagine yourself dealing with the stress in your life in a calm and relaxed way. See yourself solving your problems in calmness by thinking well by thinking clearly.

Continue this exercise a few moments as you like ... always thinking: “With the mastery of calmness, I can neutralize any stressor and solve any problem.”

(repeat as desired)

- **Returning to normal consciousness**

Now prepare to return to normal consciousness. Imagine a cool wind blowing across your forehead. As you feel the coolness, think:

“My forehead is pleasantly cool. I feel a pleasant sensation of coolness on my forehead.”

Now imagine your body is growing lighter. Imagine your body is filling with energy. Very slowly take a deep breath. As your body fills with air think:

“I feel cool and pleasant. My body is growing lighter. My body is filling with energy.”

And now slowly return your thoughts to the external surroundings, the present place, the present time. Begin to move your toes, ... contract your fingers, ... contract and relax your facial muscles, ... swallow your saliva, ... clench your fists and stretch your arms and legs, ... inhale and exhale deeply, ... slowly open your eyes, ... look around and notice your surroundings, ... remain quiet for a few moments.

Two Bonus Techniques

Once you have mastered the *Intelligent Response*, it can be used in two other ways to gain you great advantage. If we understand that the power of the *Intelligent Response* is to maximize our intelligence, and that we will always make better choices when we are calm and relaxed than we can make when we are frightened or angry, then the only rational choice is to choose calmness.

•The Up/Down Technique

If you are aware that you have a stressful event scheduled, you can begin using all the signposts of the approaching stressor as an opportunity to become more calm and relaxed. Normally those signposts of an approaching stressor would cause us to feel more on edge, more anxious, and stressed, but with the help of the *Intelligent Response* we can use those signposts as opportunities to become more calm and relaxed.

As the stressful event comes closer in time, every time I find myself feeling anxious about the upcoming stressful event, I can tell myself the closer in time the event becomes, the more and relaxed I want to feel, thus turning those signposts for the approaching stressor into *anchors* for the *Intelligent Response*.

As I am driving to the stressful event, I tell myself, the closer I get, the more calm and relaxed I want to feel. If I encounter a stoplight on the way, I say, “The longer I wait with the red light, the more calm and relaxed I will feel.”

When I finally arrive at the location of the stressful event, I will feel calm and relaxed. As the event unwinds, I use all the aspects of the event as opportunities to feel more calm and relaxed. And, of course practice makes perfect.

• Converting Pain into Calmness

If you have visit to the Dentist, or have an uncomfortable medical procedure scheduled, you can also make it much more manageable by being calm and relaxed. I once chose to undergo, what for most people would have been a very painful dental surgery, with no anesthetic, by using this technique.

As the procedure began, I simply told myself to interpret pain as an intense sensation that needed and equally intense calming and relaxing response to be comfortable.

Every time the Dentist did anything that felt uncomfortable, I would say to myself:

“The more intense the sensation, the more calm and relaxed I will feel.”

This became my mantra. I thought it over and over. Because I had practiced the Intelligent Response many times, it became relatively easy to interpret the intense sensations as cues to deepen my feeling of relaxation and calmness.

To my amazement, I soon found that even the most intense sensation was welcomed because the feeling of calmness and relaxation it provoked felt so good.

A procedure that normally required use of large amounts local anesthetic, and that usually required 4 separate visits to the Dentist, was accomplished in one visit with the use of no anesthetic of any kind. ;>)

Not only was I amazed by how well it worked; the Dentist was equally amazed that surgery without anesthesia was even possible.



I strongly recommend practicing the *Intelligent Response* once or twice daily for the first eight weeks, then at least once every other day for another six months. At that point you will be an expert. You will be able to calm and relax yourself instantly at will.

With practice, calmness will become second nature. So never hesitate to calm and relax yourself. With the mastery of calmness, you are conditioning your body to react to threat and the stresses of life with the *intelligent response* rather than the maladaptive *fight or flight response*. And once you have made this skill your own, you can begin using the *Bonus Techniques* to good advantage in dealing with scheduled stressful events, and to make usually painful events easily manageable.

And, finally, it is just as important that you *share this knowing with other humans*. You can give no greater gift than the mastery of calmness. So please share these 12 pages with everyone you know.

Timothy K. Wilken

(Revised January 12, 2015)