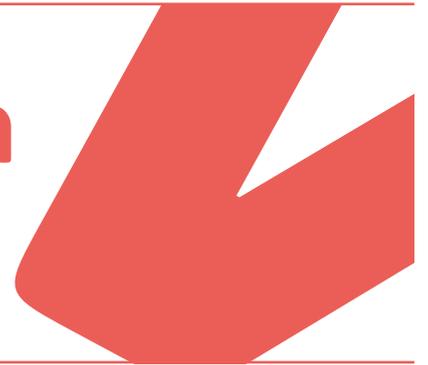


Ideas for relaxation activities



Authors: Tinnitus UK staff.

People can and do manage the impact that tinnitus has on their lives. Here are some ideas for ways to minimise the intrusiveness of the noises. These suggestions may be especially useful for people with tinnitus who have hearing loss.

Introduction

Relaxation can be an effective self-management tool for tinnitus. By doing activities to promote relaxation, you may be able to reduce your stress and notice your tinnitus less.

People find all sorts of different activities help them to relax. What works for one person might not work for another. Try different activities and see what works for you. Remember that depending on your mood, methods may be more effective at different times.

Exercise

Doing regular exercise helps to achieve a higher level of wellbeing. This can make it easier to ignore and cope with tinnitus and can help with sleep.

If you are not used to exercise, begin gently with a walk or a swim or a bike ride in a quiet park. Tai chi, qi gong and yoga (which can all be adapted for people of all abilities) have been shown to be beneficial for people with tinnitus.

Creativity

Writing

Grab a pen and some paper or open a word processing program on your computer. You could do a 'stream of thought' piece, writing whatever comes to mind, write a letter to a friend, or even start your first novel! Perhaps you could take up journaling or scrapbooking, using a notebook or doing it online as a blog. There are plenty of free platforms for this. Everybody has something they're passionate and knowledgeable about. Pick your own topic and start writing.



Tinnitus UK tries very hard to make sure our information is right, but it cannot tell you everything. It is not a substitute for medical advice. You should always check with your doctor or hearing health professional.

Draw or paint

Pick up a pad and something to make a mark with. Whether you are using a pencil, paints, or pen, don't be too hard on yourself. Just let the colours, images or lines flow.

Colouring

Colouring for adults has been a big relaxation craze. While you concentrate on your colour choices and not going over the lines, your mind can rest.

Woodwork

Making something with your hands can be a very rewarding experience. Using very sharp tools is a great motivator to focus on what you're doing and not on your worries or tinnitus.

Knitting, crochet or embroidery

The repetitive and tactile nature of these crafts has been likened to meditation. With yarn and some needles or a hook, you could create something attractive and useful. There are lots of video tutorials online if you need to refresh or learn new skills.

Physiological relaxation

Physiological relaxation involves focussing on sensations in your body to help you relax. The following techniques are suggestions you might like to try.

As with all relaxation techniques, these will require a bit of practice before you start feeling their benefits. You may find classes locally to help you learn the techniques.

Progressive muscle relaxation

This exercise takes about 20 minutes. It tenses different muscles in turn and then relaxes them, to release tension from both your mind and body.

Make sure you are in a warm, quiet place with no distractions. Sit or lie down in



a comfortable position. Close your eyes and begin by focusing on your breathing, breathing slowly and deeply.

If you have pain in certain muscles, or if there are muscles that you find difficult to focus on, just pass over them.

For each muscle group, hold the stretch for a few seconds, then relax. Repeat each cycle a couple of times. It's useful to keep to the same order as you work through the muscle groups.

Face: Push the eyebrows together, as though frowning, then release. Screw your whole face up tightly, then release.

Neck: Gently tilt the head forwards, pushing your chin down towards your chest, then slowly lift again.

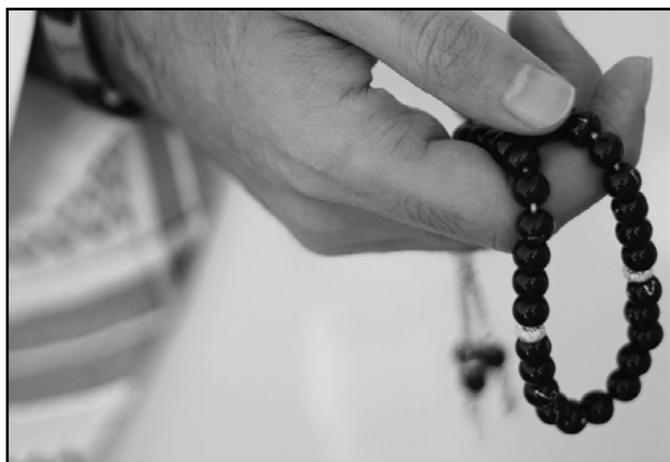
Shoulders: Pull them up towards your ears (shrug), then relax them down towards your feet.

Chest: Breathe slowly and deeply into your diaphragm so that you're using the whole of your lungs. Then breathe slowly out, allowing your belly to deflate as all the air is exhaled.

Arms: Stretch your arms away from your body, reach, then relax.

Legs: Push your toes away from your body, then pull them up towards your body, then relax.

Wrists and hands: Stretch your wrist by pulling your hand up towards you, and stretch out your fingers and thumbs, then relax.



Spend some time lying quietly after your relaxation with your eyes closed. When you feel ready, stretch and get up slowly.

Aromatic river rock foot bath

Place a layer of smooth, rounded stones in the bottom of a large bowl or basin. Cover the stones with warm water and add a drop or two of your favourite essential oil or some bath product if you like. Place the basin on a towel in front of a comfortable chair. Sit in the chair, place your feet in the basin, and move your feet back and forth over the stones, rolling them under your feet. Focus on how they feel and the textures as you do so.

Busy hands

Prayer or worry beads have been used for centuries to help people relax, meditate or pray. Having something to hold and manipulate, something to 'twiddle' or fidget with, can have a calming effect.

There are many sensory and fidget toys available. 'Twiddle muffs' were originally designed for patients with dementia. These are fleecy or knitted tubes of fabric you can put your hands in. They have beads and ribbons and other things attached. As well as providing warmth and comfort, they give something for the hands to do.

Breathing exercises

Don't worry if you find it difficult to stay focused when you start breathing exercises. It's a skill that needs to be learned and it will come with practice.

Practice deep breathing in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Loosen or remove any tight clothes. Make yourself feel completely comfortable - sit in a supportive chair, one that supports your head and arms, or lie down. Place your arms on the chair arms, or flat on the floor or bed, a little bit away from the side of your body, with the palms up.

If you're lying down, stretch out your legs, keeping them hip-width apart or slightly wider. If you're sitting in a chair, don't cross your legs.

Start by breathing in and out slowly and in a regular rhythm as this will help you to calm down.

Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without strain. Breathe in through your nose. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom. Breathe in slowly and steadily counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first).

Then let the breath escape slowly, breathing out through your mouth, counting from one to five.

Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath.

Practise this relaxed breathing for three to five minutes, two to three times a day (or whenever you need to).

Other activities

Aromatherapy mists and candles

Certain fragrances, such as lavender and chamomile, are said to have a relaxing effect. Why not try lighting a scented candle and practise breathing exercises?

Blowing bubbles

This isn't just for children! Blowing the perfect bubble depends on great breath control. Label each one with one of your worries and watch them float away.

Fly a kite

On a breezy day, take a kite and watch it swoop across the sky!

Construction toys

Lego, Airfix kits and Meccano are old favourites. They need concentration and dexterity to build, so are great for taking your focus away from your tinnitus.

Jigsaw puzzles

Another rewarding hobby that needs concentration and focus. They come in all kinds of designs, so why not pick one of a place that looks peaceful and relaxing?

Birdwatching

You can do this in your garden or balcony by hanging bird feeders and waiting for the birds to come to you. Or you could visit a nature reserve. You don't need any equipment - just see what you can spot.

Crossword puzzles and sudoku

These are also good for concentration and focus. Pocket-sized books of puzzles are widely available.

Other techniques to boost relaxation

In addition to finding activities which you enjoy, you could explore how relaxation techniques could help you. There are lots of different techniques to try.

Sound therapy might also help you relax if you have mild or moderate hearing loss. These include using white noise generators and wearable devices which can be used during the day and night.

Help and support

The Tinnitus UK Support Team can answer your questions on any tinnitus related topics:

Telephone: **0800 018 0527**

Web chat: **tinnitus.org.uk**

Email: **helpline@tinnitus.org.uk**

Text/SMS: **07537 416841**

We also offer a free tinnitus e-learning programme, Take on Tinnitus at **takeontinnitus.co.uk**

References

The list of references consulted in the production of this leaflet is available on request.

Alternative formats

This publication is available in large print on request.

Feedback

We welcome feedback on all our information.

You can pass your comments to our Communications Team:

Telephone: **0114 250 9933**

Email: **communications@tinnitus.org.uk**

or by writing to us at the address on page 5.

Tinnitus UK publications

**Available in Easy Read*

Our information leaflets are written by leading tinnitus professionals and provide accurate, reliable and authoritative information which is updated regularly. Please contact us if you would like to receive a copy of any of our information leaflets listed below, or they can be downloaded from our website.

For adults:

*All about tinnitus**
Complementary therapy for tinnitus: an opinion
Drugs and tinnitus
Ear wax removal and tinnitus
Flying and the ear
Food, drink and tinnitus
*Hearing aids and tinnitus**
Hyperacusis
Ideas for relaxation without sound
Information for musicians
Mindfulness for tinnitus
Musical hallucination (musical tinnitus)
Noise and the ear
Otosclerosis

Pulsatile tinnitus
Relaxation
*Self help for tinnitus**
Sound therapy
Sources of mutual support for tinnitus
Supporting someone with tinnitus
Taming tinnitus
Tinnitus and disorders of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) and neck
Tinnitus and pregnancy
Tinnitus: a parent's guide
Tinnitus: a teacher's guide
Tinnitus and sleep disturbance
Tinnitus and stress
*Tinnitus services**

For children:

Ellie, Leila and Jack have tinnitus (under 8s)
Tinnitus (8-11 year olds)
Tinnitus (11-16 year olds)
Ellie, Leila and Jack have tinnitus activity book
Tinnitus activity book (8-11 year olds)
Tinnitus activity book (11-16 year olds)



Tinnitus UK
Ground Floor, Unit 5,
Acorn Business Park,
Woodseats Close,
Sheffield S8 0TB

Helpline 0800 018 0527
Email helpline@tinnitus.org.uk
Website tinnitus.org.uk

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