

**THE TOP**

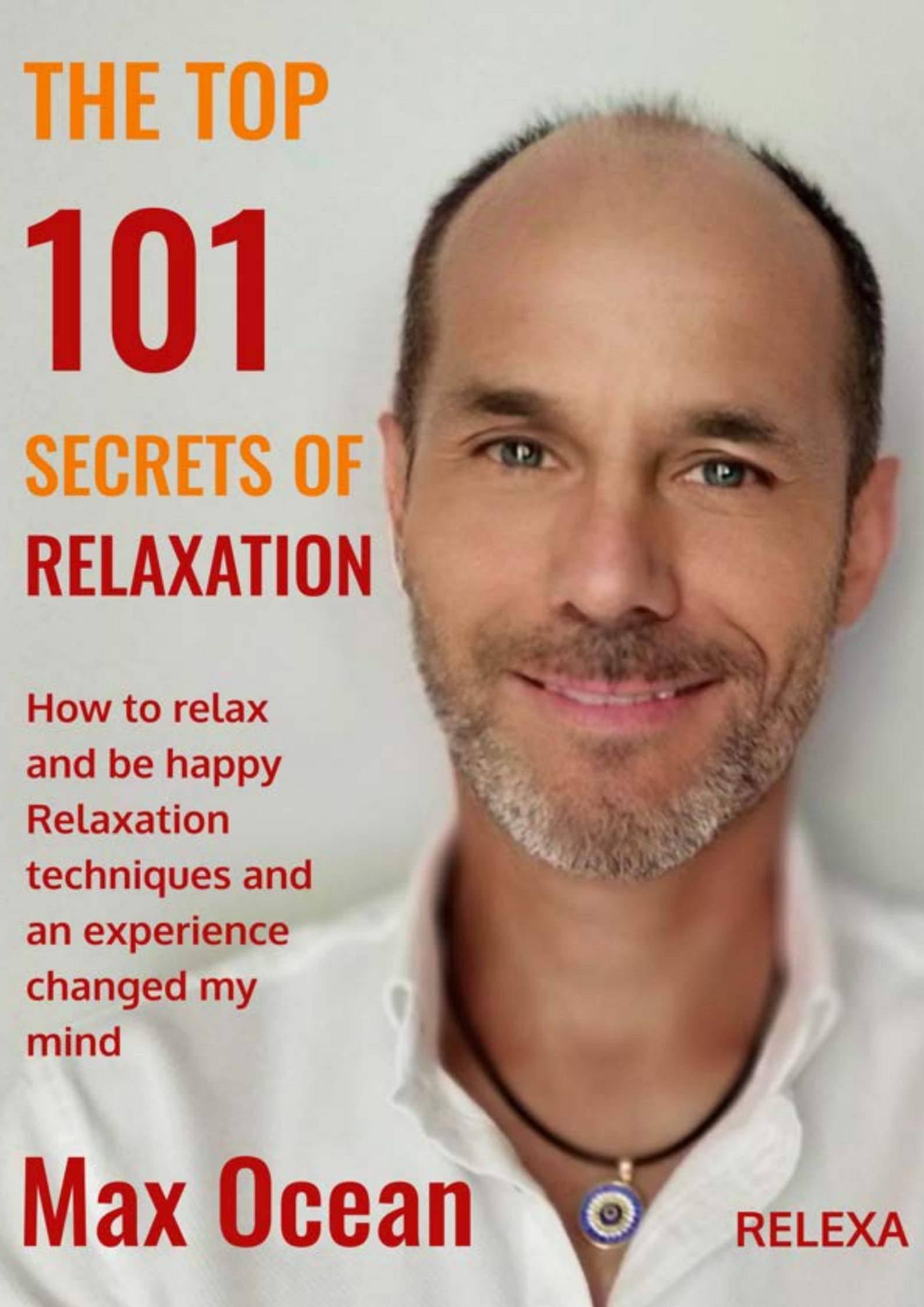
**101**

**SECRETS OF  
RELAXATION**

How to relax  
and be happy  
Relaxation  
techniques and  
an experience  
changed my  
mind

**Max Ocean**

**RELEXA**



# The Top 101 Secrets of Relaxation



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*Hello, my name is Max Ocean, and I would like to share my own experiences and insights about relaxation and stress with you in this book.*

Even during my childhood, I somehow always felt tense and under stress. Of course, as a young child I didn't know the meaning of the words tension and stress. With the wisdom of hindsight, I know now that there were only a few moments during my youth when I was truly relaxed.



Looking back, it is amazing to me how early I started looking for and striving for real relaxation. I began to meditate unconsciously when I was 10 years old. Fifty years ago, the word meditation wasn't part of the everyday vocabulary of a 10-year-old. Meditation and relaxation exercises were not as widely practiced and appreciated as they are today.

Lying in my bed at night, I would practice my little private sleep procedure. I would close my eyes and consciously breathe deeply, inhaling and exhaling, and then I would drive my conscience and energy to my left foot and start to relax it by saying: "My left foot starts relaxing with the toes."

Hello There



The relaxing energy now flows slowly to my sole and heel, and then it flows slowly up my leg, filling each cell with warm and relaxing energy. Then it flows to my knee, thigh and hip.” Then I would repeat the mantra for my right foot, and do the same with my left arm, right arm, belly, chest, head, eyes, and brain until my entire body was filled with warm, relaxing energy.

That helped, even back then. I learned this simple yet effective relaxation technique, called autogenic training, from a priest at my school. And I slowly combined it with a kind of relaxation meditation.

Since then I have read many books and attended many seminars on relaxation, meditation, yoga, and qigong, and I’ve practiced them all. I’ve found them all helpful, but nothing really offered a breakthrough in achieving deep relaxation. So over the years I have developed my own insights, knowledge, practices, techniques, and exercises, which I’ve refined over and over again.

The great breakthrough came one day, pretty unexpectedly, in the form of a dangerous but absolutely life-changing event. I was spending a few days on a yacht in the Adriatic Sea, sailing single-handed, when I made a stupid move and fell overboard into the open sea. I tried to reach the boat, but you cannot swim as fast as a yacht sailing with good wind.

I watched it heading for the horizon. Did I panic? No, not a single second! Once I'd realized that I couldn't reach my boat, I considered my other options. Northeast of me, I spotted a tiny brown dot on the horizon. An island! My only hope and chance.

I can tell you, when you find yourself in the open sea, facing death, and you know there is nobody else who can help you survive, you start to see things differently. It was only me and the ocean, waves, wind, and sky. Maybe some friendly fish beneath me in the water, and maybe dangerous sharks. I thought about my life and the likelihood of my drowning.

While I was thinking about dying, I saw myself struggling to keep my head above the water, not breathing anymore, sinking to the bottom of the sea... And I remembered that even strong swimmers drown, not from water-filled lungs, but from cold water causing a drop in their body temperature until their muscles lose strength. I could feel the cold, but dying that day was not an option for me.



*"View from my yacht. Can you see an island? "*

***I performed self-hypnosis and imagined swimming in the warm Caribbean Sea. It helped a little; it bought me some time.***

While I was swimming toward this dot on the horizon, I reflected on my life and what I would miss, or what I would be sad about losing.

I thought about my wonderful villa and said to myself, no, I would not miss it. I thought about my Porsche and my BMW in my garage at home, and I realized I would not miss them or be sad to lose them. I realized I would not miss any of my material possessions! The only thing that was important to me at that moment was the love of my daughter, and I understood there were still things I had to do in my life.

***Then, all of a sudden, I felt absolute freedom, endless harmony, and infinite love for all beings and creatures.***

I realized that I was in the moment. I didn't feel any fear; I only felt me, the sea, the moment, and life. It may sound strange to you, but I had never felt as free in my entire life. I was completely calm. I felt the energy of life, freedom, and faith in life.

I felt two strong arms under my body moving me through the water. And I heard the words, "Don't worry!" Again and again. Whenever I thought about drowning, I heard the voice telling me not to worry and I felt the strong arms carrying me through the water. In the moments when I didn't worry, I felt deep peace and freedom. I had to stop myself in these moments and remind myself, "Hey, Max, wake up! You're fighting for survival here, not for enjoying the moment."

Well, since you're reading this book, you know I survived, so I'll leave it at that for the moment.

This was the most powerful experience I've ever had. It changed my life, my thinking, and my habits. In order to learn how to live in the here and now, there's no reason for you to have a similar experience to what I had. It was my "karma" to do it. So you don't have to go swim in the open sea; just read my book.

After this life-changing experience I started to see things differently. I started to dive deep into the freedom of the here and now, the moment. Today, I am able to relax, switch off, and dissolve negative feelings and fears in a very short time without aids.

Some days I succeed in doing so without effort, other days it's not that easy, and occasionally I have to spend more time and energy to achieve relaxation – namely when worries or fears are too deep and too dominant, like when I'm woken by a bad dream in the middle of the night.



*"This is me relaxing.."*

Unfortunately, during the night there is very little one can do about real problems or worries through direct action. During the night the world sleeps, so to speak.

The only thing you can really do is learn to deal with those fears or worries.

In this book I share my knowledge and experience with you because I want you to be able to relax better and more specifically. The more people are able to relax on our beautiful blue planet, the more true joy, harmony, and love will develop among us all. The more love and harmony there are, the fewer wars and less suffering there will be.

# Is this you?

You feel choked. You're suffocating. Your heart keeps racing and you just want to slow it down, but you don't know how. Stress tightens its grip on your lungs. You can't seem to stop thinking or relax. This is the constant struggle you face. Fear, happiness, joy, bliss...

Emotions across the spectrum compete for your attention at every point of the day. The secret to relaxation feels so far away, but you need it within your reach. You stretch out your hand... You're desperate for an answer. It's right here.

*I really love to experiment and discover new methods, ways, and technologies for self-improvement, relaxation, better sleep, and more harmony.*

I have tried many relaxation methods over the years – and here are the ones that I have chosen as the best for you.

I call it “The 101 Secrets of Relaxation.” Soon, you will find a way to suppress the negatives, amplify the positives, and keep your mind in that solemn peaceful state where it focuses on neither the mistakes of the past nor the uncertainties of the future. Here, now, you will learn all it takes to find the true relaxation that you crave.

Before we get to the crux of the matter, let's first take a look at what relaxation actually is and means. The better we understand the meaning of the term, the easier it will be for us to create or find true relaxation.



When we think of relaxation, often what comes to mind first are things like going on vacation, sitting in front of the TV eating chips or popcorn while watching a good movie, pursuing a hobby, having sex, having a massage, lazing the day away in the sun... But is this real relaxation?

On the surface, yes, it's a form of relaxation, but it's a superficial relaxation that is short-lived; it's just a flash in the pan.



***Basically, it's no more than a distraction or form of anesthesia. We're just scratching the surface of real relaxation.***

A former business partner of mine, who was like a mentor to me, would often say to me, "Let's go have a drink. Alcohol and women help you relax." We'd usually go out then and we'd start with beer, then switch to wine and then to vodka.

At the time I thought, yes, this is great; this is really relaxing. But it wasn't real relaxation. All it did was to make me used to drinking, and if I wanted to relax, then alcohol always had to be involved. It took me some time and effort to break this habit and learn to relax without alcohol.

If you treat yourself to a glass or two in the evening after work, or a joint, you may think, "Now I am relaxing; I deserve it." But is this real relaxation? The answer is yes and no. It is just a form of superficial relaxation. It strongly depends on what you do in this moment: If you sit and enjoy watching the sunset while having a nice drink, yes, it is a form of relaxation.

But if you drink alcohol to numb yourself so you no longer feel stressed, then no, it's not really relaxation. Alcohol and drugs are primarily a form of anesthetic.

***Deep, true relaxation cannot be achieved through alcohol, drugs, distraction, or anesthesia.***

So, if you go on vacation and have chips and a beer while watching the sunset, is this relaxation? Yes, it is if you enjoy the moment and not only the alcohol. And if you watch a romantic movie with your partner? Yes, it's a form of relaxation if you enjoy spending the time with your partner and you're not just using the movie to distract yourself.

Real or true relaxation has little to do with distraction or numbing. In principle, it's very simple. But as is so often the case in life, the things that seem simple are often the hardest.

But I can assure you that once you understand it, it will become easier. Let's just take a closer look at the origin and meaning of the word relaxation.

The Greek word *hēsychia* – plural *hēsychiai* – means a state of stillness, relaxation, calm, undisturbed, come to rest.

And this is exactly where the first solution to the riddle lies. Relaxation has something to do with peace and quiet. You can achieve true and deep relaxation in a state of silence, calm, and privacy. The key is to be in the moment, the here and now.

***There are two forms of relaxation: superficial relaxation, or distraction, which evaporates just as quickly as it came; and true relaxation, which goes deeper and, importantly, lasts longer.***



# The flip side of relaxation

*What is the opposite of relaxation? It is stress. So, the next question is, what is stress?*

Stress is the body's response to a threat or pressure. When we feel anxious about, overwhelmed by, or unable to cope with a situation, our bodies respond by producing a surge of hormones to deal with it, whether it's falling overboard from a yacht or having problems at work.

Sometimes, this stress response is very useful: it can help a man overboard to push through fear and enable him to swim a long distance. Once the stressful event is over, the stress hormones will usually return to normal levels quickly and there won't be lasting effects.

"Experiencing some short periods of stress is just fine. In fact, it's even healthy," (Jonathan C. Smith, a professor of psychology at Roosevelt University and founding director of the university's Mindful Initiative).

Stress is neither bad nor good; I am learning to use the state of stress correctly. For me, stress can be positive and useful when I encounter work-related problems, for example. Stress helps me to fully focus on the here and now, and on finding a practical solution. I feel like I tune in: my whole body and mind are working as intensively as possible. I have learned to use stress to my advantage. Of course, it doesn't always work that way. Like any other manager, I sometimes have highly elevated stress levels.

# Understanding the body's stress and relaxation responses

Our autonomic nervous system, which regulates our unconscious bodily functions such as breathing and heartbeat, comprises two components: the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems.

They work in tandem but have opposing effects on our organs, enabling them to precisely control our reaction to a threat or pressure. They induce stress and relaxation, respectively.

The sympathetic system controls our organs with regard to an actual or perceived situation of threat, tension, pressure, or exertion. It prepares the body to either fight or flee in the face of danger – the so-called fight-or-flight response.

Specifically, the sympathetic system activates the release of stress hormones to optimize breathing and blood circulation in order to boost the supply of oxygen and glucose to the brain and the muscles.

Once the danger has passed, the parasympathetic nervous system takes over to return the body to a state of relaxation. This system is responsible for rest, regeneration, metabolism, and the build-up of reserves – the so-called rest-and-digest response.

*The following table shows the opposing effects of the two systems.*

<b>Body area, function</b>	<b>Sympathetic nervous system: State of performance</b>	<b>Parasympathetic nervous system: State of recovery</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heart rate</li> <li>• Pupils</li> <li>• Blood vessels</li> <li>• Blood pressure</li> <li>• Digestion</li> <li>• Breathing</li> <li>• Sweat production</li> <li>• Muscle tension</li> <li>• Salivary discharge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heart beats faster</li> <li>• Extension</li> <li>• Narrowing</li> <li>• Increase</li> <li>• Reduction</li> <li>• Acceleration, intensification</li> <li>• Increase</li> <li>• Increase</li> <li>• Decrease</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heart beats slower</li> <li>• Narrowing</li> <li>• Extension</li> <li>• Decrease</li> <li>• Improvement</li> <li>• Slowdown</li> <li>• Decrease</li> <li>• Decrease</li> <li>• Increase</li> </ul>

*"Calm mind brings inner strength and self-confidence, so that's very important for good health."*

*-- Dalai Lama*

# Distraction vs true relaxation



As we've seen, true relaxation is different from diversion, distraction, or pursuing any kind of pleasure. There's no pill you can buy or button you can press to induce relaxation. Real relaxation is achieved by you and your mindset and your thoughts.

You need to act with your mind or body, or both – it's the only way to truly relax. Deep relaxation will cause a wonderful feeling of inner happiness and joy. It's a feeling of being completed, and this feeling won't vanish in a few seconds or minutes.

For me, a state of relaxation is always associated with a feeling of warmth, internal slowdown, and muscle release. You may have different sensations in response to relaxation.

The main thing, however, is that your mind relaxes and lets go of the constant stream of seemingly endless thoughts, worries, and fears.

# What is relaxation actually?

To relax means to calm the body or the mind, or both. Since body and mind are connected, relaxing the body usually leads to automatic mental relaxation, and vice versa. Many relaxation techniques benefit both body and mind. Sometimes it is easier to first start relaxing your body, and your mind will follow. I find it easier to start with physical relaxation: after an intense workout especially it is easier for me to relax my thoughts once my body is relaxed.

Of course, this may be different for you. The benefits of relaxing the body include a release of physical tension, a decrease in muscle stiffness, and improved circulation.



Achieving real mental relaxation means no longer overthinking things, worrying, wishing, or wanting. It's about calming down activity in the brain to stop racing thoughts. Deep relaxation is actually to live in the moment, and not wishing for anything more.

Sometimes, I have these priceless moments of complete inner silence. It's what I call a complete relaxation of the mind. Sometimes, my thoughts just float like white clouds across the sky; they do not disturb my inner silence and absolute peace.

## *It's not always easy, however, to stop your mind from racing.*

But in this book, I will reveal to you how you can learn to relax and cultivate more inner relaxation, happiness, and pleasure. I will describe techniques that have been proven effective in relaxing both body and mind. Once you've tried them out and discovered what works best for you, it will be easier for you to relax.

The most important thing you need to know is that nobody other than yourself can make you relax! Only you can stop or control your thoughts in order to achieve true relaxation.

The modern lifestyle can be extremely stressful. Juggling work, family, and social obligations, it can be hard to make time for yourself, but it is important that you try to find the time.

Learning to relax can help to keep you healthy in both body and mind, which will help you cope better with stress.



# Why relaxation is important

Luckily, relaxation exercises aren't complicated and don't have to take up a lot of your time to be effective. If you can find 10 minutes of your day for yourself, you can easily establish a simple relaxation routine.

As the CEO of my company, I am under constant pressure. Employees don't always complete tasks in the way that I expect from them.

I don't always get the results I hope for. I constantly have to resolve issues that crop up. Yes, and sometimes I have strong negative emotions, but this is normal since we're all human and not enlightened. It is in such moments that I feel the negative impact of stress on me.

I feel a tremendous need for compensation and balance. And this is when the ability to relax and meditate saves me.

Once I realize the stress is too much or I've been under stress for too long, I take a step back and give myself at least a few minutes' break.

Sometimes, I just brew a cup of tea, do some breathing exercises, and mindfully enjoy my tea.

# The benefits of relaxation exercises

Relaxation exercises may not be a priority for you if you're faced with numerous responsibilities, but this means you might miss out on the benefits of doing them regularly, which include:

- Reduced muscle tension
- A slowed-down heart rate
- Lower blood pressure
- Improved digestion
- Improved concentration and mood
- Improved sleep quality
- Less fatigue
- Less anger and frustration
- An improved ability to cope with problems

