

## DEALING WITH PHYSICAL TENSION TO HELP TEST ANXIETY

Here are a few exercises you can try to help relieve the tension in your body. It can help you relax and boost your energy level.

### **Focal Breathing**

Often, stress is a result of a lack of oxygen. This exercise focuses on breathing and optimizing oxygen intake on every breath. Start by exhaling all the air in your lungs. Exhale slowly for ten seconds. Then, keep exhaling until you feel your lungs are completely empty. Breathe in through the nose to a count of eight. Keep your shoulders down and focus on filling your rib cage. As you feel it expand, start to push down into your abdomen. You should feel your lower body expand and near the end, pressure in your lower back as your diaphragm lowers. Exhale slowly, focusing your breathing by shaping your lips in an ooh position. Pretend there is a candle in front of your mouth that you are trying to blow out. Focusing on this type of breathing will help to focus your mind as well as work to re-oxygenate your blood and reenergize your body.

### **Body Check**

Sit down someplace comfortable and close your eyes. Focus on the muscles in your feet and notice if there is any tension. Tell the muscles in your feet that they can relax. Do the same with your ankles, then move up to your calves, thighs, and buttocks. Tell each group of muscles to relax. Work slowly being sure to scout out any tension that may be hiding in obscure places. Do the same for your lower back, diaphragm, chest, upper back, neck, shoulders, jaw, face, upper arms, lower arms, fingers, and scalp. Pretend you are tracking an electrical current through your body that it starting at your toes and escaping from your fingertips and scalp. You may have to do this twice to be sure not to overlook any tension, but be thorough in your search.

### **Exercise Aerobically**

This is more of a lifestyle than a practical on-site method. Still, it can help to reduce general stress and even improve your health. Do some form of exercise that elevates your heart rate and keeps it beating at that rate for twenty to thirty minutes. It should be something you enjoy, and that you can do at least three times a week. Aerobic exercise includes cycling, basketball, running, swimming, and tennis just to name a few.