

Cue-Controlled Relaxation

Cue-controlled relaxation is a very quick and easy relaxation technique

1. Set up a cue to remind you to relax.

There are two different types of cues:

- a) **Symptom Cue**
- b) **Internal Cue**

The best way to do cue-controlled relaxation is to do it when ever you notice a symptom cue:

- **Physical Symptom:** tight muscles, cold hands, feeling hot, hyperventilating, etc.
- **Emotional Symptom:** feeling frustrated, irritated, annoyed, angry, etc.
- **Behavioral Symptom:** teeth clenching, heavy sighing or exhalations, yelling, cursing, etc.

Whenever you notice a symptom cue, do the cue-controlled relaxation. However, you may not always catch yourself or notice a symptom cue, especially if you are very busy or involved or focused or stressed. External cues are an alternative. External cues work best if linked to some naturally reoccurring event such as:

- the phone rings
- save a computer file
- let the dog out
- there's a commercial on TV/Radio
- you're at a stop light
- your watch alarm sounds

You can also develop "cue prompts", such as putting colored dots in certain places (telephone, watch, rear view mirror of car, etc.). Whenever you see the prompt, practice the exercise whether you need it or not.

Note: It's very important that once you set up a cue, you actually do the relaxation exercise when the cue comes up. Eventually it will become a healthy habit!

2. Relax by doing the following

- a) Take a deep breath
- b) Exhale *s l o w l y*...
- c) Say a word to yourself as you exhale (e.g., "relax" or "calm")
- d) As an option (if it's convenient) - Close your eyes and focus on letting your muscles relax

REMEMBER YOUR CUE!!!