

## Relaxation Therapy

Learning the art of relaxation is a skill that can take many years to acquire but more and more as a nation we are recognising the huge part it plays in lowering our stress levels and the many benefits it brings to aiding health and wellbeing. We explore three different methods of relaxation: progressive relaxation, visualisation and yoga nidra.

**Progressive relaxation** encourages mind/body relaxation by inviting the mind to concentrate on different parts of the body in turn. Conscious tensing and relaxing of the muscles may be included to enable us to feel the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed one.

**Visualisation** engages the thoughts in a journey away from the immediate surroundings, perhaps to a garden or a beach. The aim is to encourage the mind to conjure up relaxing and pleasant sensations which can have a beneficial effect on us physically.

**Yoga Nidra** is practised as part of the discipline of yoga often at the end of a session. Yoga Nidra is similar to progressive relaxation where the mind is asked to concentrate on different parts of the body but with this technique the mind is almost 'distracted' with a much quicker progression around the body and it often includes the introduction of unrelated images and visualisation.

Central to all these methods is awareness and attention to breathing. Each relaxation method always starts with diaphragmatic breathing instruction and this is practised throughout any relaxation session.