

## **Eight Steps to the Relaxation Response**

**Step 1:** Pick a focus word, phrase, image, or short prayer for your relaxation response session. Or choose to focus on your breathing. You may choose one neutral word (such as “one” or “peace”) will work – you should draw this work out during your entire exhaled breath as you repeat silently.

**Step 2:** Find a quite place where you are unlikely to be interrupted, and sit calmly in a comfortable position.

**Step 3:** Close your eyes.

**Step 4:** Progressively relax all your muscles, beginning with your toes and feet and moving up through your entire body, shoulders, and face. Spend a few minutes with this relaxation exercise.

**Step 5:** Breathe slowly and naturally. As you exhale, repeat silently your focus word or phrase, or prayer, or picture the image you have chosen. Or focus on your breathing rhythm, if you have chosen a breath focus for this exercise.

**Step 6:** Assume a passive attitude throughout the session. Don’t worry about how you are doing; you can be sure that just by following these eight steps you are changing your physiology from a stress response to the relaxation response.

When other thoughts come to mind, which they are sure to do, simply think, “Oh well,” and turn away from the distraction and back to your focus word, phrase, prayer or breathing.

**Step 7:** Continue with this exercise for 12 to 15 minutes. You may want to use a timer so that you do not have to keep looking at a clock.

**Step 8:** Practice this technique at least one daily, preferable in the morning before breakfast or in the afternoon or early evening just before dinner. If you find that you are tired and might fall asleep you can open your eyes while you continue to focus on your word, phrase, prayer or breathing.