

Tinnitus SA

Relaxation, stress reduction and tinnitus

Tinnitus can be a source of stress, can be caused by stress, and is often made worse by stress. Stress is a natural response of the body to many of life's experiences, good or bad. Things which cause a stress reaction – an illness or death in the family, financial worries, trouble at work, even positive things like planning a family wedding – are termed stressors. When tinnitus is constant, the body can react to it as it does to other stressors – with agitation, mood changes and/or insomnia.

Many people with tinnitus report that their tinnitus is louder, more intrusive or more annoying when they are feeling tired, worried or anxious for other reasons and that these feelings interact with their tinnitus annoyance. It is therefore very helpful to learn some basic techniques for reducing the negative effects of stress upon the body, upon tinnitus, and upon one's feelings.

Tips for reducing stress

1. Practise Relaxation

Most of us benefit from learning and practising relaxation techniques. Relaxation will not make the tinnitus go away but it will calm you and help you to feel better able to manage the tinnitus and any other stress in your life. It can also help you to sleep better. The type of relaxation you choose will depend upon your own preference. You might prefer to attend classes in relaxation, yoga, meditation or Tai Chi, or to learn and practise relaxation exercises

at home at a time which suits you, using an audio-recording.

Relaxation is a self-control technique; you need to participate actively to change your usual responses to stress. You can actually achieve greater self-control by “letting go” of tension. Relaxation is a skill and, like any skill, it will get better with practice, so set a special time to practise, turn down the telephone and avoid other disruptions. One technique is Progressive Muscle Relaxation. This is what you do:

- Sit in a comfortable chair with your eyes closed, arms resting on the armrests with palms up, or with hands open, palm in palm, in your lap.
- Take a few deep, slow breaths, in and out
- Tighten a muscle group for 5 seconds, then release for 30 seconds – start with your feet (tense – relax) and move up the legs (tense – relax), then the arms, the trunk, and, finally, neck, jaw and face

Many local Councils and Community Health Centres offer inexpensive courses in relaxation. Seek information from your local library or Council office. There are also many audio recordings, with or without soothing music, which can help talk you through the procedure.

There are many apps available to help guide you through relaxation practise. Search ‘relaxation’ in your app store.

About Tinnitus SA

Tinnitus SA is a web based tinnitus information service designed to provide awareness, factsheets and information about management options for people with tinnitus and health professionals alike. Tinnitus SA services are provided by non-profit South Australian Audiology business Can:Do Hearing on behalf of the South Australian Government.

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Tinnitus SA
Lightens the load

Tinnitus SA

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2. Exercise Regularly

Regular exercise helps to enhance one's feeling of well-being. It improves physical strength, stamina, flexibility and heart and lung fitness. Increased fitness reduces tiredness, improves sleep and aids digestion. The best exercise is the one you enjoy so that you are happy to do it regularly. Take a walk, swim, play tennis or golf. If you like activities which are potentially noisy, e.g. fitness classes to music, you may wish to wear noise-excluding earplugs to avoid aggravating your tinnitus. Some people also report that their tinnitus becomes louder during exercise but this is only a temporary effect due to raised blood pressure. Exercising with a friend or in a group can also help increase your motivation and commitment.

3. Do Things You Enjoy

Tinnitus can be most intrusive when the mind is unoccupied. Keep mentally active, as well as physically active. Doing something engrossing and enjoyable - work, hobbies, gardening, crafts, playing music and other leisure pursuits - will provide a focus of attention which distracts your attention away from the tinnitus sound.

4. Do Things for Other People

Take your mind off your own concerns by helping others, doing voluntary work, visiting lonely people, helping at your local school/community centre/Aged Care facility.

5. Cognitive Therapy

Many of the emotional problems which occur with tinnitus, such as depression and anxiety, are a result of your thoughts about and reactions to the sounds. The aim of cognitive-behaviour therapy is to identify negative thoughts and emotions about tinnitus and to teach a range of self-control techniques so that you can change the way you view and react to the tinnitus. The aim is not to 'cure' the tinnitus but to help you to find effective ways to manage the problem and your reaction to it. See our Fact Sheet on 'Changing Beliefs About Tinnitus'.

6. Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a form of deep relaxation in which a person can direct their attention away from the tinnitus and towards a relaxing scene. People can learn self-hypnosis as a technique for relaxation and attention control, choosing to focus on a pleasant scene of their own choice.

7. Seek Information

Be better informed so that you don't suffer from misunderstandings about tinnitus. There is a lot of good information about tinnitus and its management available from various tinnitus groups. Try your local library or the Internet for information from the Australian, British, Canadian or American Tinnitus Associations. Tinnitus SA has a list of quality websites which may prove useful.

8. Listen to Soothing Sounds

Quiet, soothing music or sounds of nature (natural or recorded) can promote relaxation and distract your attention from the tinnitus. If you avoid complete silence you may find that your tinnitus is less obvious. See our Fact Sheet on 'Tinnitus Instruments'.

9. Get Enough Sleep

We all need regular, restful sleep and tinnitus can make it harder to get. Avoid eating or drinking, especially caffeine, before bed. Ensure your bed is comfortable and the room a comfortable temperature. Maintain good sleep habits - try to go to bed at regular times and not oversleep to make up for lost sleep. Use quiet sounds - music or natural sound recordings - to help distract you from the tinnitus. Practise Progressive Muscle Relaxation or meditation before going to bed. See our Fact Sheet on 'Sleep and Tinnitus'.



Can:Do Hearing

Contact Us

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