

Eye Relaxation Techniques



Why it's needed:

The eyes are the windows through which the brain receives information; so interconnected as to be considered the “eye-brain” system in Eastern thought.

It is well known that our present habits of staring at computer, phone, and tablet screens for hours do a great deal of damage to the eyes. The tension and exhaustion created make it more difficult to have a relaxed mind. And, according to doctors, eye strain is one of the leading causes of poor vision.

What can be done:

Aside from the obvious practices of taking periodic “screen breaks,” and focusing on more varied distances, there are some helpful techniques to help your eyes to relax, and the wonderful thing is that you don't need to go anywhere or get anything to enjoy the benefits.

Wash your eyes with cold water frequently. Try this once in the morning, once in the evening, and any time during the day that you feel your eyes are particularly sore or strained. Cold water has a soothing effect that can help your eyes to relax.

TECHNIQUES TO TRY:

1. Palming

Palming is a relaxation technique made famous by Dr Bates, an ophthalmologist, who believed that relaxing the eyes appropriately could better one's eyesight. Similar techniques have been widely used in yoga practices to relax the eyes and mind treat eye ailments.

The easiest way is to sit on a comfortable chair, with a table in front of you. Place your elbows on the table (if needed, place padding, such as a small pillow on the table, so that you can place your elbows on it), and cover your eyes with your palms. Be sure not to slouch forward or strain your neck looking up. It's best to rub your palms together so that they are warmed (you will feel the warmth emanate from them). Now place the palm of your hand on your eyes, such that your fingers are overlapping each other, with the palms slightly cupped, without putting pressure on your eyes. Just relax and breathe slowly and let your mind relax. You can do this pose for as long as you are comfortable, with a suggested time of about two to five minutes. If you find this helpful, you can even do "mini-palms" as desired.

If you like, here are some questions to ask yourself:

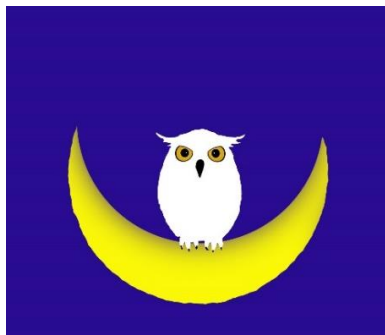
- Do you see shapes? Lights? Colors? Nothing at all?
- How do you feel when you palm? Do you feel relaxed, or are you feeling anxious?
- There are so many things that you could notice - even not being able to palm is interesting and gives you valuable information for further work. The only rules are those you make up for yourself!

2. Visualizing

One of the interesting things to know about your eyes is that they focus on whatever distance your mind is thinking of; even when they're closed. If you close your eyes and picture a distant scene, your eyes will focus on that distance. The change of focus is important in letting the eye muscles relax.

Here are a couple of techniques:

- Close your eyes and picture yourself walking along the beach on a beautiful day. Feel the warmth of the sun, the refreshing breeze, and the general feeling of wellbeing. Look out over the water to a cloud in the sky. Trace its shape by outlining it with your nose. Then shift your vision back to the sand, and find a shell there. Imagine you pick it up and examine its detail. Change your focus back to the shoreline, and continue your walk. When you are finished, slowly blink your way back to the present.
- A favorite technique for many is "The Owl and the Moon." Sit comfortably and close your eyes; if you like you can palm. Picture a field of dark blue behind a yellow sliver of crescent moon. Tilt the moon on its side, so that the rounded portion is on the bottom, with the pointed cusps toward the top. Trace the bottom edge of the moon with your nose, moving your head back and forth. Notice whether the owl is rocking.



3. Swinging

For this technique, stand in a relaxed way, with your feet about shoulder-width apart, and your arms hanging loosely. Turn your upper body slowly and gently to the left, allowing your gaze to fall on whatever you are facing. Then turn to the right, slowly and gently swinging back and forth. Allow your eyes to see the world going by. Go slowly enough to avoid getting dizzy and losing balance. Notice if your eyes can shift from scene to scene, without having to “hold on” to any image.