

BOOKMARKING RELAXATION

HOW TO INSTANTLY RELAX EVEN IN TENSE SITUATIONS



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BY MATTHEW JOYCE

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For more information, please contact:

Matthew Joyce
10953 Cherry Ridge Rd
Sebastopol, CA 95472
matthew@matthewjoyce.com
www.matthewjoyce.com

TIRED OF FEELING STRESSED?

Learn how to take five in a single breath!

Imagine that you're running late for an important appointment.

On the way out the door you accidentally spill something on your pants. The stain is embarrassing. You glance at your watch and sigh. Then you turn around and change your clothes.

Once in the car, you turn the key. The ignition cranks, but the engine doesn't start. You gulp and try again. Still nothing. "Not now!" you plead.

Finally the car starts and you merge into traffic. But it's barely moving. There's road construction and the flag man is waving people through in small groups. You squeeze the steering wheel and wait your turn with growing impatience. The meeting is going to start soon.

After three incredibly long red lights and half a mile behind a slow driver your blood is beginning to simmer. By the time you get to the parking lot you're tense beyond reason. Your jaw feels tight, your shoulders are hunched, and you're starting to get a headache.

You rush up the stairs and stand outside the door. On the other side is the opportunity you've been waiting for.

You need to relax. Right now. But how? With a single breath.

The mere act of deliberately breathing in and out can be enough to shift from one state of being to another. From tension to relaxation. If you know how.

The trouble is most people never learned how. Growing up, we spend time memorizing facts about subjects like math, geography, and history. We learn procedures like long division and the scientific method, and practical skills such as balancing a checkbook or driving a car. All of these help us to lead happier and more productive lives. Yet, curiously, few of us ever studied anything to help us actually live more enjoyable lives.

Imagine how it would have helped you if your physical education class had taught you not only how to strengthen your body, but also how to relax. Not just stretching, but true full-body relaxation. Imagine your gym teacher had taught you how to memorize that feeling in the same way your math teacher taught you how to memorize the multiplication tables.

Think what your life would be like if:

- Recognizing your propensity to stare out the window during her lectures, your Social Studies teacher had taught you how to stay focused in the present moment.
- Your English teacher taught you the life-altering power of a Yes-This statement.
- Your Art teacher showed you how to access your inner source of creativity.
- Your Biology teacher explained how to use your mind to improve your health.
- Your Guidance counselor trained you how to consult your own inner voice for guidance in any given moment.

These are the types of abilities that this report and others in the Life Skills Library will teach you. You can think of them as resource guides that fill in the gaps overlooked by many educational systems. I provide short reports like this one to speed you on your way, plus advanced materials for those eager to master more complex practices like discharging emotional situations, deliberately creating the experiences you desire, and accessing inner wisdom.

In this report you'll not only learn how to relax with a single breath, you'll also learn how to memorize and recall an experience—any experience. You can use the same technique to instantly feel alert, poised, or sleepy. How you apply the lesson depends only on your imagination. To learn more about the resources available to you turn to page 10.

Yet it isn't a magic trick. You'll find it takes practice to bring about instant recall. But you had to study in school too, right? So get ready to learn a life-changing skill and prepare to do some homework.

You'll use the ideas in this report far more often than you've ever needed to use the date of the signing of the Magna Carta, or the name of the capitol of Tanzania. Best of all, the results are ones you'll enjoy using right now and for the rest of your life.

So turn the page and let's get started.

Matthew

Matthew Joyce
Sebastopol, CA, USA

P.S. If you enjoy this report, you can enjoy similar articles in my free newsletter, filled with practical advice to ease your way, enrich your life, and empower you to make meaningful difference.

EVER WISHED YOU COULD RELAX AT WILL?

You can. In the time it takes to breathe in and out, you can shift your experience from great tension to total relaxation.

Learning how to relax on command is a bit like setting a bookmark or favorite in your web browser. The first time you're looking for information on the Internet you may use a search engine to find a web site that meets your needs. You sift through the search results, go to the site, read the page, and follow the links until you eventually find the exact information you're looking for. Fortunately you only need to do it once. If you want to reach that page again you can simply set a bookmark that will take you straight back to it without the hassle you went through the first time.

You can do the same thing with the feeling of being relaxed.

YOU'RE DOING IT ALREADY

You make mental bookmarks all the time, although you may not have realized you were doing so. To see what I mean, take this a little quiz:

2 + 2 = _____

My telephone number is _____

The answers these questions are likely so basic you don't have to think about them.

They're facts that you've committed to memory, and they're now available with instant recall. These are bookmarked facts and figures.

Of course, you don't just bookmark pieces of information. You also memorize body movements by practicing them over and over again until they're fluid and can be largely done without thinking.

For instance, imagine for a moment that you're tying your shoes. Reach out to your foot and grab the imaginary shoe laces. Then move your hands as if you were tying the knot. More than likely these are well-practiced moves.

Or imagine you're brushing your teeth. Open your mouth and move your hand accordingly. More than likely when you put your toothbrush in your mouth you start brushing in the same place and follow the

same sequence out of habit.

These are movements that you've been doing for so long you scarcely need to think about them.

The same process of memorization is used in sports for movements like a golf swing, and in music when you practice a song, repeatedly playing the same notes and chords until the movements feel smooth and easy.

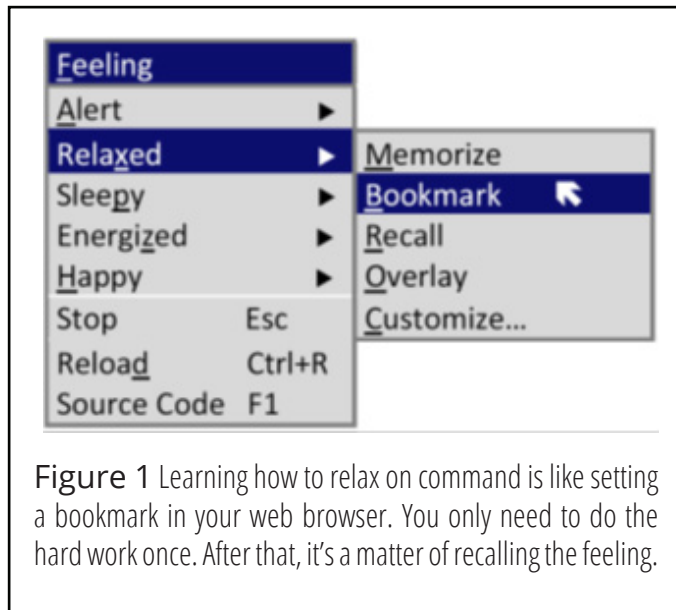


Figure 1 Learning how to relax on command is like setting a bookmark in your web browser. You only need to do the hard work once. After that, it's a matter of recalling the feeling.

Now imagine you're a pizza chef kneading the dough and tossing it high in the air. You twirl the pizza, and it gets thinner and larger with each twirl. Can't do that one so well? If not, it's because you haven't practiced the moves. Yet with enough time and training you can probably toss pizza dough with the best of them.

That's what mental bookmarking is all about. But instead of practicing facts and figures or movements, you memorize the experience of having a feeling.

"Can't memorize a feeling," you say. Think they happen spontaneously?

Well, feelings do arise quickly and seemingly of their own volition, but that doesn't mean you can't control them and bring them about at will. Think about movie actors. They need to cry and express other emotions on demand. Not just once, but sometimes repeatedly until the director is satisfied with the scene.

I'LL HAVE WHAT SHE'S HAVING

Even if you're not an actor chances are you've already used a process similar to the one they use. It starts with the act of memory. Perhaps you've reminisced about a favorite moment with a friend or recounted the travails of an adventure gone awry. In this case you simply take things a step further and recall the feelings associated with that event.

***Actors
memorize
feelings all
the time. So
can you.***

To understand the process, start by thinking of an especially vivid moment in your life. Recall the experience with as much imagery as you can possibly associate with it. Try to remember enough detail that you can walk through the event in your mind. Recall the setting and the scenery, including the people, things, and activities around you. Remember the light, the noises, the temperature. Now recall any thoughts you might have had at the time. What were your emotions? How did your body feel? Concentrate on the sensations you felt within your body at that moment.

For example, let's say you just heard some terrible news that a loved one had died. What thoughts raced through your mind? Perhaps you thought that you'd never see them again; or you wished you'd said one last thing; or that you'd spent more time with them. What emotions welled up within you? Did you feel shock at a sudden and unexpected departure? Maybe you felt relief that your loved one was no longer suffering from a painful, debilitating illness. Was your initial reaction followed by sadness? If you felt sad, did your facial muscles contract downward and your lips begin to tremble? Did your abdomen tighten and begin to quiver? Did your eyes start to close at the corners as the tears were released?

You may have chosen a more positive experience, but this is what actors might do to recreate the feeling of sadness, which enables them to cry on demand. This memory process can help you to feel happy, or relaxed, or alert at will.

Every experience is composed of a mix of three things: thought, emotion, and feeling or physical sensation. When an experience is happening live for the first time you typically take it in as a whole, but when you want to memorize something it's easier if you simplify it by focusing on one aspect at a time. That's why when you want to memorize facts you focus on thoughts; to develop habits you focus on behaviors; and to cry on demand you focus on emotion.

BOOKMARK THAT FEELING

To achieve relaxation on command you focus on the individual elements that make up the experience of being relaxed.

The first thing to do is to get yourself into a relaxed state.

Find a quiet place where you can sit or lay down comfortably without interruptions. Close your eyes and take several breaths. Relax your

body as much as you can. Sit quietly for a few moments as the tension releases and your body grows increasingly relaxed. When you're ready, take time to observe the following:

- Notice your breathing as it flows in and out. Are you breathing from your chest, your belly, or both? Notice the pace of your breath. Does your breathing feel comfortable? If not, continue the relaxation process and then check again.
- Notice how your body feels. Mentally scan your body, starting with your feet and gradually work your way up to your head. If you find any tension along the way, breathe into it and relax it further. When you're ready, move onto the next location. When you've scanned your whole body, take note of the overall sensation of feeling relaxed. How do your muscles feel? How does your breath feel?
- Notice your emotional state. What emotion are you experiencing? How are you experiencing it? Are you experiencing more than one emotion at the same time?
- Notice your thoughts. What are you thinking about? Has the subject matter changed? Notice the speed of your thinking. Is it faster, slower, or the same? Is it easier, more difficult, or the same?
- Notice your ability to observe things in this moment compared to times when you are not relaxed. Are your powers of observation greater, less, or the same? Do you notice additional detail? Can you see things from a larger perspective?

There are no correct answers to these questions. There are only your own observations, which will help you to remember what being relaxed is like for you.

At each stage, as you observe your breath, your body, your emotion, and your thoughts, with your hand, or in your imagination, touch the spot on your forehead just between and slightly above your eyebrows. As you press gently against your skin, take a deep breath in and out. When you do so, say to yourself "I remember."

This deliberate process helps to set the memory by associating each observation with the physical movements of breathing and touching your forehead. You can use this same motion when you want to recall the observation or thought at a later time. Just take a breath and touch your forehead; as you move your hand away, pull out the memory you're looking for.

Every experience is composed of three things: sensation, thought, and emotion. To memorize it, you focus on each aspect one at a time.

To further aid in recall, when you've finished inputting all of your observations think of an overall symbol that you can associate with the composite experience you've just created. This is where you make the mental bookmark that will take you quickly back to the experience.

You might choose a word like "peace." Or you might use numbers for different sensations. So "1" might mean energized and alert, "2" might be alert and relaxed, "3" might be relaxed and sleepy, etc. Maybe you'd prefer to use visual images like a rainbow, or full scenes like laying in a hammock under a tree on a summer afternoon. If you collect cookie jars, you might imagine a different one for each sensation. The point is that the symbol you choose should be meaningful to you and help you to bring back the experience on command.

With your symbol in mind, mentally gather all of the separate observations you made into the overall experience of being relaxed. Then touch your forehead one last time. Take a deep breath, think of the symbol, and then say, "I remember being relaxed. I am relaxed." That's it. You've just bookmarked the experience.

HERE'S A SUMMARY OF THE BOOKMARKING PROCESS

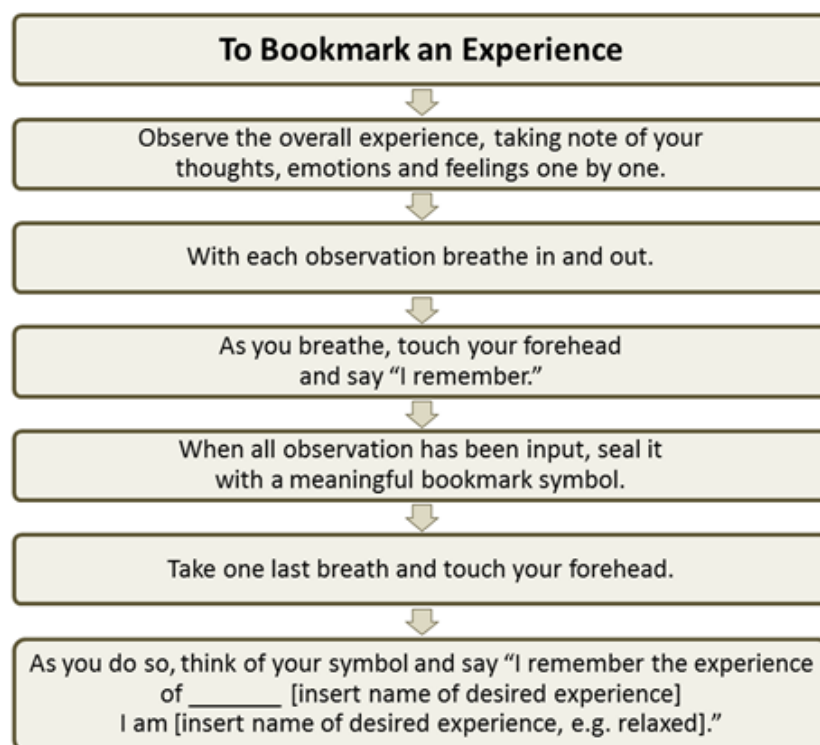


Figure 2 The above sequence outlines the basic steps of creating a mental bookmark. See the main text for additional details.

RECALL THE FEELING

Setting bookmarks gets easier with repetition. After you've done it a number of times you may find that you can observe your thoughts, emotions, and feelings all at once, making the imprint process faster. The same applies with recall.

To recall the feeling of relaxation you obviously must first recognize the current experience you're having as being one that you'd like to change. As you find yourself in different circumstances, notice how you're feeling in that moment. Perhaps your neck is tight with tension; or you feel nervous butterflies in your stomach; or your mind is racing. These are the sensations that you'd like to release.

Note and name the various components since it's easier to let go of something you've acknowledged than it is release something that is lurking below your conscious awareness. Gather the new feelings into an overall experience and then say, "I release this nervousness." Or frustration, or impatience, or whatever the feeling may be.

Then recall your symbol for relaxation and the composite experience you have associated with it. Take a breath and touch, or think about touching, your forehead. Say aloud or to yourself "I remember being relaxed. I am relaxed." As you remember the feeling, it will return.

The feeling may be faint or unstable at first, but just like memorizing the multiplication tables or tying your shoes it will get easier and more natural with repetition. Try the process a few times when you're not under pressure, such as just before you go to sleep at night. If you're not satisfied with your recall, repeat the steps you used to set the bookmark the first time.

When you begin to get the hang of it, try applying the technique in real life situations. In time, you'll be able to do it almost effortlessly, just like using a bookmark on your web browser.

After you've input each aspect, choose a bookmark symbol that's personally meaningful to help you recall the sensation on command.

HERE'S A SUMMARY OF THE RECALL PROCESS

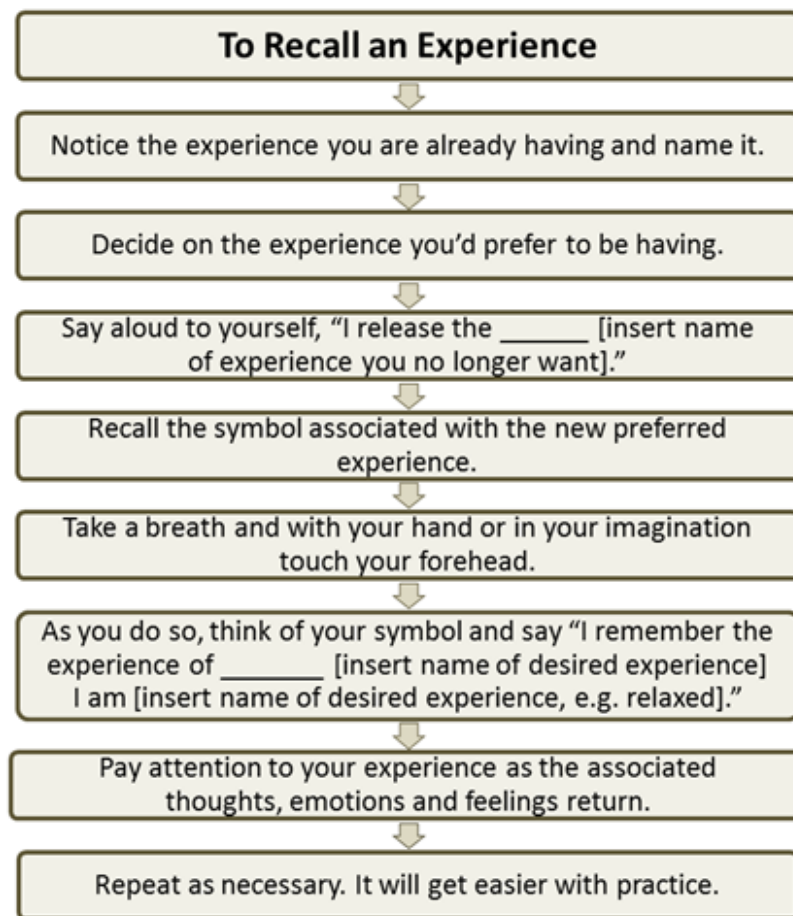


Figure 3 The above sequence outlines the basic steps of recalling a mental bookmark. See the main text for additional details.

OH, WHAT A GLORIOUS FEELING. OH, WHAT A WONDERFUL DAY.

As I've described the bookmarking process it appears to have multiple steps, but with repeated use you'll find that you can merge them together. I've used this technique for so long that at this point when I decide I want to shift my experience to another state of being I need only think of the new state and take a breath. The rest happens on autopilot, just like brushing my teeth or tying my shoes.

I use my "relaxed and alert" bookmark nearly every day. When work gets a bit stressful and I notice myself tensing up, I breathe my way into a relaxed state. I do the same thing when I find myself in a hurry and facing circumstances beyond my control, like sitting in a taxi cab in traffic when I need to be checking in at the airport.

The most useful application I've found is for public speaking. I used to feel frightfully nervous when I spoke in front of crowds. While repeated practice definitely made things easier, it was not until I thought to use the single breath technique just prior to stepping on stage that all of my apprehension vanished. Now I step in front of audiences with hundreds of people without twinges of nervousness.

The great thing about this technique is that you can bookmark any state of being, not just feeling relaxed. I've bookmarked the mental states for accessing creativity, guidance and blissful meditation. You might find it comes in handy when you're getting drowsy while driving and you want to quickly return to feeling mentally alert, or if you've been flustered by something and you need to "put on a happy face" in front of people to continue your day. You can apply the technique to suit your needs.

ACTION PLAN

1. Start using the single breath technique with a common and practical state like relaxation.
2. Find a quiet time and place to follow the steps for bookmarking and recalling the experience of being relaxed. Try the process several times in a low pressure situation until you get the hang of it.
3. Apply it in real life situations. Practice and adapt it to suit yourself.
4. Choose additional states of being that you'd like ready access to and repeat the process.

That's it. Thanks for your interest.

If you enjoyed this report, please share it with your friends and customers. You can print it, reprint it, email it, or post it on the web. All I ask is that you don't change it in any way, including altering any links.

You can bookmark any state of being. Try it when you're getting drowsy while driving and you want to feel mentally alert, or if you've been flustered and need to quickly get back to feeling normal.

ABOUT MATTHEW JOYCE



I work with results-oriented business leaders and high-achieving individuals so they can stop fighting against the flow and finally enjoy the careers and lifestyles they actually want. I help them optimize the inner life tools because without wise use of their inner resources they're unnecessarily limiting their effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. For example, I teach my clients how to instantly relax even in tense situations, how to focus amidst chaos, and get more done with less effort. And those are just a few introductory skills. As a result of working with me, they take more joy in what

they do, focus on what's truly important, and enjoy rich and rewarding professional and personal lives.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

If you're like most high achievers you shun complacency. Instead you feel driven toward continuous improvement because you naturally focus on future potential rather than past results. Yet everyone—no matter how driven, high-achieving, or self-aware—has belief systems and self-imposed limitations that color their perceptions, influence their decision making, and keep them from taking actions that yield the greatest and highest results.

The fastest way to move beyond these restrictions is to work with someone who shares your vision for the future, while not being influenced by your past. When we work together we quickly move you past your outdated ways to doing things so you can implement new approaches and generate positive outcomes in situations that have previously proven unsatisfactory.

I offer private and group coaching packages that can be conducted live or via phone, Facetime, or online conferencing. I also offer training workshops and speaking engagements on variety of topics, including: Understanding the Flow of Life, The Life Audit, The Six Life Tools Everyone Must Master (and Why Most People Never Do), and Life Skills techniques such as 3 Surefire Ways to End Stress and Suffering, How to Focus Amidst Chaos, How to Get More Done with Less Effort, The Subtle Shift that Makes Problem Solving Much Easier, How to Read People, The Other Way to Use Your Imagination (great for creative tasks and new product development), and many more.

CONTACT ME

Whether you have questions, comments or you're ready to take action, I'd love to hear from you. Feel free to reach me via email at matthew@matthewjoyce.com



EMAIL: MATTHEW@MATTHEWJOYCE.COM
WWW.MATTHEWJOYCE.COM