Pressing the Reset Button: Relaxation Skills for EMS Providers

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EMS is stressful.

Duh.
Stressful calls.
Stressful shifts.
Stressful lifestyle.
This wouldn’t be so bad, except…
No chance to recover.
Relaxation is an incredibly effective way to recover.

It can be trained.
What I’m going to cover today

I. Framework for understanding relaxation training
II. Strategies for relaxation
III. How to integrate relaxation into your life
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This is an overview.

Participate- no need to take notes.
I. Understanding Relaxation
“Life isn’t a sprint, it’s a marathon.”
“Life isn’t a sprint, it’s a marathon.”
“Life isn’t a marathon, it’s a series of sprints.”
Marathon

Stress -> Stress -> Stress -> Stress
Sprints

Stress-&gt; Recovery-&gt; Stress-&gt; Recovery
You have to balance and alternate periods of stress and periods of recovery.

Little stress, little recovery

**Big** stress, **big** recovery
Stress:

- Sympathetic Nervous System ("Fight or Flight")
- HPA Axis (chronic stress)
Recovery:
- Parasympathetic Nervous System
SNS/HPA -----> PNS
There are a million ways to relax.

They all might work.

These definitely work.
Cognitive Techniques vs. Somatic Techniques
II. Strategies for Relaxation
It’s practice time!
The Powerpoint will be available or you can email me directly:
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1. Cognitive Technique
The Relaxation Response
Steps to Elicit the Relaxation Response

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Relax.
4. Breathe through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say a word or phrase silently to yourself.
5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes.
6. When distracting thoughts occur, simply return to repeating your word or phrase.
2. Somatic Technique
Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

The Basics
16 Muscle Groups

1. Dominant hand and forearm
   • Make a tight fist while allowing upper arm to remain relaxed

2. Dominant biceps
   • Press elbow downward against chair without involving lower arm

3. Non-dominant hand and forearm
   • Same as dominant

4. Non-dominant biceps
   • Same as dominant
16 Muscle Groups

5. Forehead
   • Raise eyebrows as high as possible

6. Upper cheeks and nose
   • Squint eyes and wrinkle nose

7. Lower cheeks and jaws
   • Clench teeth and pull back corners of mouth

8. Neck and throat
   • Counterpose muscles by trying to raise and lower chin simultaneously
16 Muscle Groups

9. Chest, shoulders, and upper back
   • Take a deep breath; hold it and pull shoulder blades together

10. Abdominal (stomach) region
    • Counterpose muscles by trying to push stomach out and pull it in simultaneously

11. Dominant upper leg
    • Counterpose large muscle on top of leg against two smaller ones underneath (varies)

12. Dominant calf
    • Point toes towards head
16 Muscle Groups

9. Chest, shoulders, and upper back
   - Take a deep breath; hold it and pull shoulder blades together

10. Abdominal (stomach) region
    - Counterpose muscles by trying to push stomach out and pull it in simultaneously

11. Dominant upper leg
    - Counterpose large muscle on top of leg against two smaller ones underneath (varies)

12. Dominant calf
    - Point toes towards head
13. Dominant foot
   • Point toes downward, turn foot in, and curl toes gently

14. Non-dominant upper leg
   • Same as dominant

15. Non-dominant calf
   • Same as dominant

16. Non-dominant foot
   • Same as dominant
Start to combine muscle groups.
3. Mixed Technique
Autogenic Training
Autogenic Training Script

1. My arms are heavy.
2. My legs are heavy.
3. My arms are warm.
4. My legs are warm.
5. My heartbeat is calm and regular.
6. My breathing is calm and regular.
7. My abdomen is warm.
8. My forehead is cool.
III. Integrating Relaxation Into Your Life
Find your favorite.

Add it to your day.
1. Daily practice
2. Mini-breaks
3. Ongoing awareness
As I close...
EMS is stressful.
Stress is a fact of life. Make recovery a fact of life too.
Relaxation is one good way to recover.

And it’s easy to learn.
Thank you.

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Questions?