

How To Relax

Many people can relax on the beach with just a bottle of sunscreen, a beach chair and a good novel. That's not the case for most with AD/HD. For us, laying around in the sun all day reading can be stressful. To relax, we need a surfboard, snorkeling gear, a Frisbee or two, and half a dozen beach game balls and paddles.

People with AD/HD don't relax in the usual way — which is why vacations don't always relax us. Here's how to ensure that your summer vacation provides the breather you need.

First Things First

You can't fully relax on vacation if you've left loose ends at home. For example, if you haven't paid the gas bill before leaving, you may find yourself at the beach worrying about a late fee or cutoff notice.

Before you go away, make a list of things that need doing and then do them, even if it means spending one less day at the resort. The extra day spent in preparation will make you more at ease while you're away.

Don't Try to Fit In

AD/HD children often squirm, fidget and twirl their hair. As adults, these behaviors may be replaced by a vague sense of discontent and restlessness. In order to relax, you'll need to find positive ways of responding to these feelings.

That's why you shouldn't feel obligated to snooze by the pool after a busy day of sight-seeing, just because that's what your friends and family do to rejuvenate. You may need to sacrifice some "together time" to do what's best for you.

Going to the gym for an intense physical workout can help relax the restless AD/HD adult. Endorphins — brain chemicals released during intense exercise — are soothing to body and mind. If you're feeling particularly tense, try picking up the pace.

Un-Stress Yourself

Flight delays and hotel mix-ups are an inevitable part of vacations. Muscle tension and mental worry often result. Simple relaxation techniques and mental imagery can help.

BODY RELAXATION First, identify which muscle groups are tense. Do a head-to-toe body scan. Did you tighten your shoulders and curl them forward? Clench your fists or tighten your jaw?

Step two is to adjust your posture. If you are slouching, sit or stand tall. Lift your shoulders up and gently let them relax backwards. Then take a deep relaxing breath, inhaling and exhaling fully.

Finally, close your eyes and envision a relaxing wave or breeze. Create whatever wave image seems most soothing to you: warm or cool, strong or light, slow or fast. Recall the parts of your body that seemed the most tense. Then envision your wave washing away the tension.

MENTAL RELAXATION If you're worried about something in particular, stop and write it down. Doing so gets the thought out of your head and on to paper. Then put the paper in the zippered compartment of your travel bag, and tell it to stay there!

If your mind is spinning because you are starting to think of all the things you have to do at work when you get back, do the same thing: quickly get it out of your head and onto paper, shove it into the "worry pouch" of your travel bag, and get rid of it.

Recovery Time

Don't erase the inner peace your vacation provided by getting home at the very last minute. Give yourself time to unpack and get organized before returning to work. There's usually enough to catch up on at the office without the extra burden of laundry still undone from vacation. Allowing yourself to re-settle at a leisurely pace will extend the psychological and physical benefits of your time away.