

How to analyze your own behavior to reduce stress

JOHN N. MARQUIS / SPECIAL
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There is a simple, well-tested way of doing this, developed by Herbert Benson of Harvard. He called it "Respiration One Meditation," or ROM.

To try out the ROM technique, simply get in a comfortable position and think the word "one" each time you breathe out. Don't think of anything else between "one's." Not so easy? No, but it is easy to get better and better at it. If you practice this 20 minutes a day it lowers high-blood pressure if there is no obvious physical cause (such as obesity). It also enables you to get rid of all residual tension and get down to a hypometabolic state in which your body functions slow down and you gradually begin to breathe very slowly.

It works better if you apply your new skill throughout the day by practicing "mini-meditations" (as Dean Shapiro of University of California, Irvine, called them) while letting your muscles relax and breathing slowly while you go about your daily activities.