Take a Warm Bath  This simple activity can relax and calm you in a short time. All you need is a bathtub and warm water. Add relaxing bath salts, light some candles, and play soft music; you will feel better quickly.

Music and Sound  Playing soothing music can make you feel more peaceful and relaxed. Some people enjoy listening to tapes of waterfalls, rainfall, and other sounds from nature.

TECHNIQUES YOU CAN DO WITH THE HELP OF ANOTHER PERSON
Some relaxation techniques require the assistance of another person. These include the following:

- Massage
- Counseling or psychotherapy
- Hypnosis
- Biofeedback

Massage  Being massaged by a professional massage therapist is an excellent way to relieve tension. If money is an issue, see if a friend will trade massages with you.

Counseling or Psychotherapy  Most of us experience times when we need help dealing with problems and issues that cause us emotional distress. When you have a problem or dilemma that makes you feel anxious or stressed, you may benefit from the assistance of an experienced, trained professional. Professional counselors and therapists offer the caring, expert assistance that people need during stressful times.

Hypnosis  A natural, normal, relaxed, and focused state of attention, hypnosis is characterized by relaxed muscles, reduced sensitivity to pain, and a feeling of well-being. Hypnotherapy is the use of hypnosis to enable a person to take control of his/her feelings, behaviors, habits, and self-image. A professional therapist with formal training and experience in hypnotherapy can use the experiences from hypnosis to help a person manage stress and address a wide variety of related issues that may contribute to stress and anxiety.

Biofeedback  This process can help you relax and modify your response to stressful situations. It requires the use of special equipment that measures heart rate, blood pressure, and other measures of stress. Working with a trained professional, you can learn to control your physical responses to stress.

WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?
By practicing progressive muscle relaxation, you develop more awareness of when you begin to feel tense so that you take steps to relax yourself. Doing so helps you have more control over your body and its reaction to stress.

Progressive muscle relaxation is not recommended for some people, including those with back problems or muscle spasms.

Deep Breathing This simple technique helps you relax.

All you have to do is breathe in deeply, hold your breath for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. Repeat this process a few times and you will feel calmer. Remind yourself to do this technique a few times each day.

Physical Exercise People who get regular physical exercise seem to respond better to stressful situations. Although researchers disagree on the reasons for this improved response, they have noted that exercise does seem to increase certain brain chemicals, such as norepinephrine, that enhance the body's ability to deal with stress. Go for a walk, go to the gym, or ride a bike—any type of exercise has positive benefits.

Develop Your Interests An important way to relax is to make time to do things that you enjoy. Think of things that make you smile and do them regularly. Your list of favorites might include writing, reading, painting, dancing, listening to your favorite music, or spending an afternoon at an art gallery with a friend. As long as you enjoy it, the activity will help you relax.

Focus on What You Can Control Teach yourself to stop worrying about things you have no control over. Focus instead on things you can influence. You will feel less stressed as a result.

Meditation Almost everyone knows what it is like to worry about things. Sometimes it can be overwhelming—your mind becomes a jumble of thoughts and questions. Meditation can help quiet your mind and put a stop to the voice-over or commentary that sometimes threatens to take over. People have meditated for centuries because its effectiveness in relaxing and settling the mind.

The simplest meditation technique is to focus your attention on an object or spot in the room. (It can be anything.) Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Gaze at the object or spot, concentrating your attention on it for several minutes and breathing slowly and deeply. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to the object or spot. You may want to choose a word to repeat as you breathe deeply and focus on the object or spot.

After a few minutes of meditation, you will most likely feel more relaxed. Work your way up to a 20-minute meditation session in the morning and another 20-minute session at night; you will notice the calming effects.

Affirmations An affirmation is a positive statement that you say to yourself several times each day. Many people who use affirmations make a list of 5 to 10 statements and write them on a card. They repeat the affirmations to themselves regularly. Incorporating these positive thoughts into your day is a way to reduce any anxiety that you may feel, because the positive thoughts replace the negative thoughts.

Here are some examples of positive affirmations. You may use these to affirmations write your own.

- I am calm and relaxed.
- I am free of all worry and stress.
- I meet stressful situations with calm and determination.
- I take good care of my mind and body.
- I attract positive energy.

Journaling Writing in a private journal is an excellent way to explore your feelings and thoughts. Doing so can help you identify sources of stress in your life and express your feelings about them. If you are unsure of what to write about, here are some ideas:

- Describe what happened today and how you felt about it.
- Write a letter to a person you are angry with. Say everything you are feeling and wish you had the nerve to say.
- Make a list of all the things you are grateful for. List all of the big things and all of the small things, as well as everything in between.
- Make a list of the things that you feel upset about right now. Write down as many as you can think of until you can't think of any more, then choose the top five.