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FORM 10.10

Instructions for the Alexander Lie-Down Technique

1. Find a comfortable and quiet place, where you will be undisturbed for about 20 minutes. You will be lying on a mat or a blanket for about this amount of time. As a result, try to find a floor space that is quite clean and at is a comfortable temperature. Unfold the mat to create an area that will be sufficient to cover the ground beneath your body if you were lying on your back. Bring three or four paperback books with you and place them at the top of the mat. These books will support the back of your head, like a pillow, when you are lying down.
2. Take a seat on the mat with your legs straight out in front of you, with your gently erect spine balanced comfortably on your sit bones. As you follow these instructions, allow yourself to engage in any movement slowly and softly, with an awareness of the flow of breath in and out of the body.
3. Bend your knees so that they are pointing at the ceiling, with your feet resting on the ground before you.
4. As you exhale, lean forward over your bent legs, feeling the top of your head as it extends forward. Your arms are simply hanging from your shoulders, in a relaxed fashion. Allow your spine to lengthen softly through this slow gesture.
5. Allow your spine to roll back as you move from this seated position, leaning forward, to take a position lying down on the mat. This can be done slowly and gently. If this feels uncomfortable or stressful to you at all, you can opt to use your hands as a support and walk your body with your hands down into a lying position.
6. Reach behind your head to adjust the books so that your head is supported in a comfortable fashion. This should be just high enough to fit beneath the curve in your neck. Again, this all can be done slowly and gently.
7. You are now lying on the floor with your head and neck gently supported. Your back is straight and lengthened. Your legs are together before you. Your knees are bent so that your legs stretching from the hips to the ankles form a triangle. All of the points of your body are supported.
8. Gently move your hands from lying at the sides of your body so that they are resting on your abdomen, feeling the flow of the breath in and out of the body.
9. For the next 20 minutes, your aim is to do nothing, as much as you can. Allow your eyes to close. Recognize that this is a time for conscious rest and relaxation. With each breath in, feel the presence of life in the body, drawing in attention and vitality. With each breath out, feel the release of tension and attention anywhere it may demonstrate itself in the body.
10. Allow yourself to gently follow the flow of the breath in and out of the body, breathing in and knowing that you are breathing in, breathing out and knowing that you are breathing out. Allow the breath to find its own rhythm and flow.
11. Notice the way your weight is supported by the mat. As you exhale, feel yourself sinking into the floor. As much as you can, allow yourself to breathe out and release any tension you feel in the body, breath by breath.
12. Throughout this period of rest, if you feel any discomfort anywhere in the body, allow yourself to make any necessary adjustments to your position to allow for greater comfort and relaxation.
13. Recognize the support that your body receives, as you feel the body lengthen and relax.
14. Remain in this position as you rest for about 20 minutes.
15. When you are ready, begin to leave the lie-down exercise by gently and slowly rocking from side to side. After a few moments, rock onto your left side and use your hands to gently walk the body up to a seated position.
16. When you rise from your seated position to a standing position, do this gradually, maintaining some of the rest and presence that you established during the lie-down exercise.