

## The Big 3 Relaxation Strategy

### Visual imagery:

- ◆ Close your eyes and imagine a happy place. A happy place is somewhere you have been that is peaceful, calm, and tranquil. For example, a happy place could be a beach with the sun setting in background OR a mountain meadow with a creek running next to you and a snow-capped peak in the background.
- ◆ After you have the image of your happy place, let's go through our five senses. What do you see here? What do you smell here? What can you feel? What do you hear? What do you taste?
- ◆ Do not include the breathing until you have an image of your happy place.
- ◆ Keep your eyes closed throughout the remainder of the relaxation strategy and occasionally go back to the happy place (feel it, smell it, hear it, see it, and, if possible, imagining tasting it).

### Breathing:

- ◆ This breathing exercise requires that you breathe slowly in through your nose slowly as if you're smelling a flower and exhale out of your mouth as if you are trying to blow out a candle.
- ◆ While doing this, pay attention to how your chest rises when you breathe in and falls as you breathe out.
- ◆ There should be one breath (inhale and exhale) every 3-5 seconds.
- ◆ Try to stay focused on smelling the flower and blowing out the candle and the rise and fall of your chest
- ◆ Do this until you establish a steady rhythm of breathing.
- ◆ Include the muscle tension and relaxation after you establish a smooth breathing pattern.

### Muscle tension and relaxation:

- ◆ This muscle tension exercise has you tense three major areas of your body: (1) Jaw, (2) Upper Body, and (3) Lower Body. The important thing to remember is to release the muscle when you exhale.
  - Jaw – clench jaw and squeeze (make a low-level growl noise like a dog)
  - Upper body – flex abdomen, chest, arms, and fist
  - Lower body – flex legs and feet
- ◆ Go through the three major areas three times.
- ◆ Each time you exhale and release the tension of your muscles focus on how your mind and body become relaxed. In particular, focus on how there is a wave of relaxation that takes over your body each time you release the muscle area.