The Stress, Mind, and Body Relationship:

Stress is created either externally by our environments or internally within our minds. Both types of stress can cause chronic health effects such as, high blood pressure, high cortisol levels (also known as the stress hormone), and other various cardiac diseases. By letting your mind slow down and be at ease, your body’s physiological functions will follow.

“The truth is that we can learn to condition our minds, bodies, and emotions to link pain or pleasure to whatever we choose. By changing what we link pain and pleasure to, we will instantly change our behaviors.”
– Anthony Robbins

Practicing relaxation techniques help with the following:

- Slowing your heart rate
- Lowering your blood pressure
- Increasing blood flow to major muscles
- Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain
- Improving concentration
- Reducing anger and frustration
- Boosting confidence to handle problems

(Mayo Clinic Staff, 2011.)

These are all important reasons to get into a daily stress-reducing routine. Give yourself permission to relax. A mental break not only can help clear your mind of personal issues, but it can help you refocus with a new and fresh perspective.
Cardiac Health:

It is important to lower your resting heart rate because it allows your cardiac muscles to work less. Your heart beats up to 4,000 times per hour and does not stop until the day that our life ends. Check out this Discovery Healthy link that calculates the average amount of heart beats and breaths you have taken since the day that you were born!

Honoring other Relaxation Techniques:

Remember that one way an individual likes to relax may be something that is completely foreign to another individual. It is important to embrace the wide diversity of healthy stress-reducing techniques. How we control our mind and body in regards to our external and internal stressors is a life-long skill that is vital for our health. Some examples of various relaxation and stress relieving techniques are as follows:

Meditating          Walking          Talking with a friend
Progressive Relaxation Techniques       Praying          Singing
Closing your eyes for a few minutes    Playing an instrument      Stretching
Exercising          Laughing          Giving/Receiving a Hug

Simple and Free Practices for Relaxation

A Progressive and Systematic Relaxation: A systematic relaxation is a technique that allows one to bring awareness to different areas within the body to release tension. There is no one correct way to relax, but this is a simple technique that will provide the body with a sense of relief.

1. Lay down and prop yourself – the key is to get comfortable and supported
2. Close your eyes and take a few deep breathes
3. Let your eyes sink deeper into their sockets
4. Relax your cheeks, ears, space in-between the ears
5. Relax your upper and lower jaw, tongue
6. Walk the shoulders away from the ears, allow the rib cage to become heavy
7. Have the palms open to the ceiling and feel them sink into the floor
8. Feel your lower back melt into the floor
9. Relax your glutes, hips, and pelvic floor
10. Allow your thighs, knees, and calves to relax
11. Relax your ankles, feet, and toes
12. Breathe as you lay in complete relaxation until you feel rested
**Flex and Release Method:** This relaxation technique is utilized to bring conscious awareness to the muscles by flexing them and then physically relaxing that area of muscles. This works well for beginners because it will help provide the body and mind with immediate feedback. This doesn’t have to be in any specific order, but try it this way first.

*Forcefully flex the following areas for 5 seconds and then exhale and release to relax.*

1. Feet: toes/ankles
2. Calves; shins and knees
3. Hips; upper thighs and glutes
4. Abdomen
5. Arms; hands/fingers
6. Shoulders and chest
7. Face; neck/chin/jaw/eyes/forehead
8. Whole body

*Rest in complete relaxation, until you feel rested.*

**References:**


Mayo Clinic Staff. *Relaxation techniques: Try these steps to reduce stress.* Mayo Clinic. May 2011.  