



Sometimes people need to relax quickly, perhaps when they are in a meeting, about to give a presentation or in other situations when they are anxious or under stress. In these circumstances it may not be possible to have a lie down or use other relaxation techniques. In my hypnotherapy practice I often teach my clients to use their peripheral vision as a mechanism to enable them to relax quickly and easily.

Here is the process for accessing your peripheral vision

Look at the wall opposite you and find a point straight ahead and a little above eye level and continue to look at this point using soft focus vision until you notice that your vision begins to distort a little. You may notice that the room goes a little darker, and the area around the spot becomes more vague or fuzzier as you develop a kind of tunnel vision.

Now while still keeping your eyes on that spot on the wall slowly begin to expand your vision and notice more and more of what is at the edges of your field of vision without moving your eyes.

After a short time you will notice you are paying more attention to what you can see out of the corners of your eyes and that your awareness of what is to the side and behind you increases even to the extent that you can see more than 180 degrees.

As you remain in this state, you will notice that your breathing has slowed down and become deeper and that the muscles in your face and the rest of your body have started to relax.

Once you are relaxed and calm you can begin to come back by bringing your field of vision return to normal.

Notes

You only need to go into peripheral vision a little way and for a short time to enable the relaxation response.

Staring at the spot initiates a form of tunnel vision, which is very common when we watch TV, use a computer, engage in conversation or read etc. This is similar to the kind of tunnel vision we get when we are stressed, worried or obsessed about something which is accompanied by adrenaline. If you drive, have you noticed how other people tend to 'cut you up' or pull in front of you more dangerously when you are stressed? This is because being stressed results in your field of vision being narrowed.

Peripheral vision however activates your parasympathetic nervous system. This is the part of your nervous system that relaxes you calms and slows you down, and lets your mind, and body and emotions come back into balance. In physiological terms,

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the parasympathetic system is concerned with conservation and restoration of energy, as it causes a reduction in heart rate and blood pressure, and facilitates digestion and absorption of nutrients, and consequently the excretion of waste products.

There is also a benefit for people who habitually indulge in a lot of internal dialogue as peripheral vision appears to reduce this or stop it altogether. Many people have found peripheral vision to be useful in reducing anxiety when speaking in public because it also means that they can see the whole audience and react more easily to them as they notice how they are reacting

Please note:

If you are taking any prescribed medication or are being treated for depression or any other psychological condition please talk to your GP or a suitably qualified medical practitioner or hypnotherapist before trying this technique.