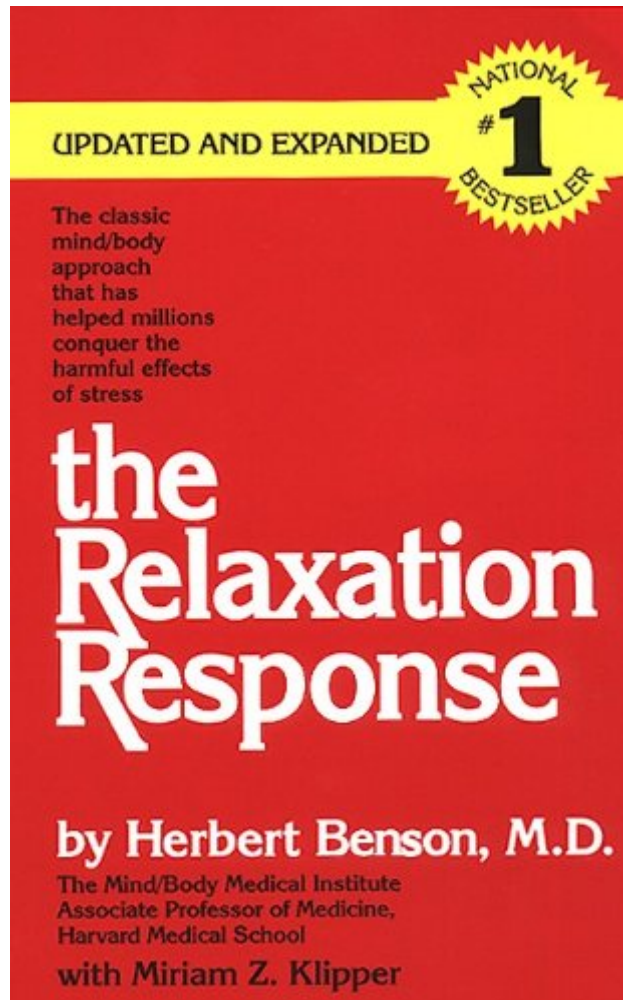


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# The Relaxation Response



## Synopsis

When Dr. Herbert Benson introduced this simple, effective, mind/body approach to relieving stress forty years ago, his book became an instant national bestseller. Since that time, millions of people have learned the secret " without high-priced lectures or prescription medicines. The Relaxation Response has become the classic reference recommended by most health care professionals and authorities to treat the harmful effects of stress. Discovered by Dr. Benson and his colleagues in the laboratories of Harvard Medical School and its teaching hospitals, this revitalizing, therapeutic approach is now routinely recommended to treat patients suffering from stress, including heart conditions, high blood pressure, chronic pain, insomnia, and many other physical and psychological ailments. It requires only minutes to learn, and just ten minutes of practice a day. Now for the first time a video is available in the ebook edition, in which Dr. Benson shows how to elicit the Relaxation Response.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I found this book to be extremely helpful. I've suffered from an anxiety disorder and its related symptoms, such as hypertension, for almost ten years now. Ever since I became aware of what

anxiety was and started reading up on it, about five years ago, I had heard about Dr. Benson's classic book on the subject, but I never got around to reading it until now. I'm glad I finally did. I had always heard that incorporating some form of meditation into one's daily routine would do wonders for calming the various symptoms of anxiety. For the last five years, I've tried over and over again, unsuccessfully, to sit quietly and do nothing. But it's extremely hard to make any mind sit still for long, and maybe especially an anxious one. THE RELAXATION RESPONSE is written in such a clear and no-nonsense way, and it's so easy to follow, that it's got me to do what I had come to believe was the impossible: to sit quietly for ten minutes every morning with a relatively empty mind. Herbert Benson is a Harvard cardiologist who pioneered the research into stress-related causes for diseases such as hypertension. Always weary of having his research seen as nothing more than new age fluffery, Dr. Benson made sure to prove his results by rigidly adhering to the scientific method. Dr. Benson's results show that there is a capacity inherent in all human beings to invoke a "relaxation response" that can counter the effects of the "fight or flight response" which is at the root of many modern stress-related illnesses. By learning to invoke the "relaxation response" once or twice a day for just ten minutes at a sitting, one can effectively lower high blood pressure, and gain more tranquility in their emotional life. This book is easy to read, and it really works.

UPDATE: Please ensure you read the update at the bottom of this post after reading the review. I had originally confused this book with The Quieting Reflex by Charles Stroebel. There is no older edition by Benson describing the 15-second technique. I originally read The Relaxation Response when I was serving in Somalia in 1993. There was a table of free books donated from the states and the title peaked my interest....given the environment. The original edition outlined an amazing technique to trigger the response (alert mind, relaxed body) several times a day, a technique that only took about 15 seconds and could be repeated over and over. It so attuned me to the effects of stress that I'd catch myself clenching my jaw/tightening my shoulders/etc...throughout the day, and sometimes I'd wake up in the middle of the night and immediately notice I was clenching my teeth, etc...) You can probably understand the value of a technique such as this for someone who doesn't have the time, place or wherewithal to meditate during the day. This was a practical exercise that could be performed several times a day while going through life. I would do the exercise while on patrol-to keep my mind sharp. Not so-the new edition! The new edition is about 95% a medical discussion about the effects of stress on the body with only the most general discussion on how to use relaxation techniques. There is no discussion on the 15 second technique which is covered in great detail in the original edition. I have to give Benson credit though...this is an extremely

responsibly written book, with no hidden agendas. (Unlike Bob Cooley who talks about flexibility like it is the ultimate panacea to all of life's ills.

Reading and using The Relaxation Response may have saved my life in 1989. It may also have destroyed my life, for it turned out to be the first paving stone on a spiritual path which lead away from much of what was accepted and familiar. The path brought me to most of what I treasure today. I was a thoroughly Western, rational, mechanist, Ayn-Rand-Objectivist, John-Wayne-style "I'll do it myself" individualist whose life was thoroughly unsatisfying. Each day I came home from a thankless, stressful job to a cold and chaotic home. I would sit on the couch and feel as though worries and disappointments were rushing about in my mind like a bunch of cats and dogs, chasing and screaming with no pause to even start on a resolution. I remembered having heard about a book called The Relaxation Response. All I knew was the title and that it was written by a "legitimate scientist." For a couple bucks, it seemed like a safe bet. Since it was written by a Harvard doctor, I could read it without admitting there was anything wrong with my modern, secular worldview. The detailed description of his experimental methods, the charts, graphs and citations gave me comfort as I read about techniques brought to the West by gurus and swamis. Dr. Benson verified the physiological changes brought about by meditation and Christian prayer, then cut away the mythology, dogma, and ritual. The process which remained is simple enough to fit on two pages of the book. I followed the instructions. I felt some peace. I repeated the process. The peace expanded. I added headphones playing the sounds of waves on a beach. Calm and clarity began to enter my daily life. I was able to be transported by music. I enjoyed a walk in the woods. I still lost my job.

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