



Stress-Relief for Developmentally Challenged Adults By award-winning author and stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Q: I work with the developmentally challenged adults. I'm looking for alternative methods of relaxation for my clients other than medication. I use music, a few enjoy shiatsu, but others do not like to be touched. Most of my clients are involved in behavioral programs in conjunction with meds. Any suggestions?

A: Yours is a population where the need for relaxation is great, yet you will naturally find considerable limitations in options that involve touch. For those who *are* comfortable with hands-on therapies, you've introduced some great options, although Shiatsu can be quite deep in some cases and you might also want to try lighter touch with less prolonged contact, such as reiki, or gentle reflexology. I've used foot-massage and hand-massage to soothe people who are uneasy with body-contact, including those who are highly sensitive, very ill, and dementia patients. A gentle backrub to music is another less-intrusive method, while the client is fully-clothed and perhaps even under a sheet or blanket, lying on his/her side, using repetitive circular motions and an open hand can be a great comfort, perhaps reminiscent of infancy.

At the risk of sounding self-serving, my own award-winning relaxation CD "*Your Present: A Half-Hour of Peace*" is used with ADHD children, as well as those with Asperger's and other autistic spectrum disorders, adults with OCD, and is played on psych units to provide relief from sleeplessness, anxiety and depression. It is, of course, also used to relieve day-to-day stress and sleeplessness as well. www.relaxintuit.com There are many, many non-tactile relaxation techniques that are either soothing, or can serve as distraction from anxiety or fretfulness. On my website (www.relaxintuit.com) take a look at an article I wrote titled, "*70 Ways to Feel Really Good...Fast!*" Many of those and other tips on my website will be applicable for your population. In addition, creative expression, being in water, play with pets time in the outdoors, dancing and opportunities to enjoy laughter, are some of the greatest stress-relievers for developmentally challenged adults, and for us all!

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