

# ADDRESSING WORRIES ABOUT RADIOTHERAPY

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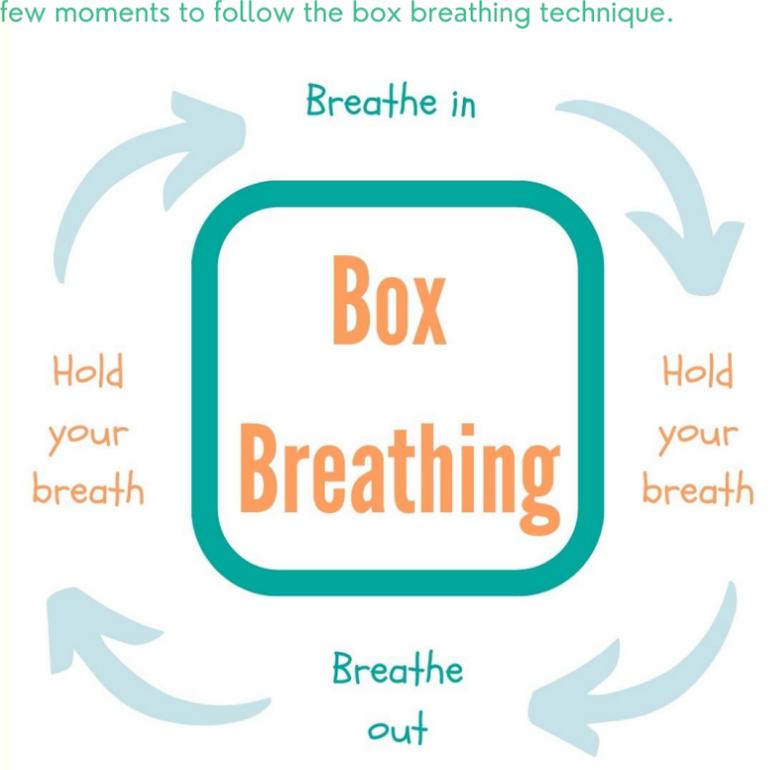
Experiencing worry in preparation for radiotherapy is normal and understandable. It is important to acknowledge that you are not alone. Many people have received radiotherapy before, and many of those people were worried, panicked, or apprehensive in the lead up. Feeling these emotions does not mean that you cannot cope.

Often when we feel worried, our mind jumps to imagining the worst case scenario, we may struggle to concentrate, and our body prepares for fight or flight, such as with unsteady breathing or a quickened heartbeat. Whilst this is all normal, there are some things we can do to help feel calmer again. You can cope with this, and there is a supportive team around you to help.

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## BOX BREATHING

Often when we are worried, our breathing may become shallow or get faster. This further fuels feelings of anxiety and panic. Instead, we can steady our breathing and focus on taking the breath deep into our tummy. This also helps to regulate our heartbeat, and tells our body we are safe. Some people like placing their hands on their tummy or heart as they do this. Some people like imagining a calm colour as they breathe in, and imagining an intense colour as they breathe out. However you choose to do it, take a few moments to follow the box breathing technique.



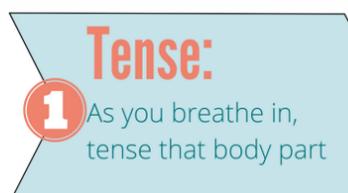
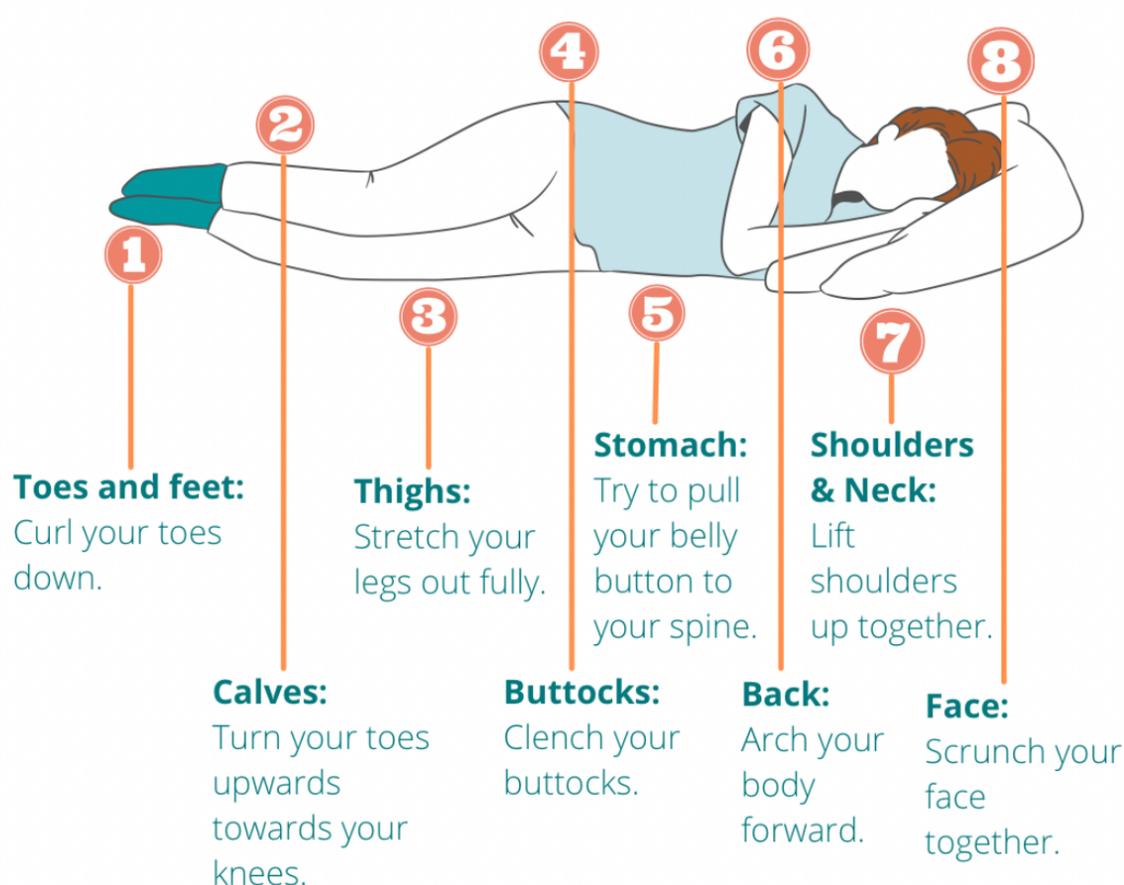
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## SAFE PLACE IMAGERY

We can use our imaginations to create feelings of comfort and safety. Take some time to mentally create your 'safe place'. A 'safe place' is somewhere you can bring to mind anytime you need, wherever you are. It should be calm, comfortable, free from judgement and safe.

1. Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe. It may be a place you've been to before, somewhere you've dreamed about going to, somewhere you've seen a picture of, or just a peaceful place you can create in your mind's eye.
2. Look around you in that place, notice the colours and shapes. What else do you notice?
3. Now notice the sounds that are around you, or perhaps the silence. Sounds far away and those nearer to you. Those that are more noticeable, and those that are more subtle.
4. Think about any smells you notice there.
5. Focus on any skin sensations - the earth beneath you or whatever is supporting you in that place, the temperature, any movement of air, anything else you can touch.
6. Notice the pleasant physical sensations in your body whilst you enjoy this safe place.
7. You might choose to give your safe place a name, whether one word or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back, anytime you need to.
8. You can choose to linger there a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and serenity. You can leave whenever you want to, just by opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now, and bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.

# MUSCLE RELAXATION



## HELPFUL REMINDERS

It is normal to feel worried or overwhelmed when thinking about Radiotherapy, or beginning any cancer treatment for that matter. But, it is important to remind ourselves that we are in safe hands, and that our feelings of overwhelm will pass.

### Grounding statements:

"It is normal to feel anxious and worried about starting a treatment, but these feelings will eventually pass."

...

"I can overcome these intense emotions, as I have in the past. I am strong."

...

"More than half of people with cancer undergo radiotherapy. It is safe, I am safe."

...

"I am in a hospital environment, surrounded by specialist staff who know what they are doing. I am in safe hands."

The medical staff are here to help care for and support you. It is important that you share your thoughts and feelings with them, and highlight any worries or issues. People respond differently to Radiotherapy, and in order to cater to your specific needs, talking about your experience can be really helpful.

The techniques outlined above can be used in the lead up to radiotherapy and while receiving radiotherapy. These techniques are not ordered and you do not have to do all of them. It is important to do what you feel is right for you. If you have any concerns, please speak to your care team.

## SUPPORT

### Macmillan Cancer Support

A charity that gives practical, medical and financial support to people with cancer in the UK. Its helpline gives guidance on cancer and advice on benefits. It also publishes booklets about cancer and treatments. Information is available in other languages.

**Tel:** 0808 808 00 00 (Freephone, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm)

**Website:** <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/>

There is also a Macmillan drop-in centre within the Queens Centre.

### Maggie's Centres

A national charity with centres across the UK that offers care and support to people affected by cancer. You can join a support group, take part in weekly sessions like relaxation and stress management or learn about nutrition and health.

**Tel:** 0300 123 1801

**Website:** <https://www.maggiescentres.org/>

**Email:** [enquiries@maggiescentres.org](mailto:enquiries@maggiescentres.org)

### Marie Curie

Call the support line for practical or clinical information and emotional support if you are living with or caring for someone who has a terminal illness.

**Tel:** 0800 090 2309 (Freephone)

**Website:** <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/marie-curie-support-line>

### Penny Brohn UK (formerly the Bristol Cancer Help Centre)

A UK based centre that offers a programme of complementary care to people with cancer and their loved ones. This is called The Bristol Whole Life Approach. They also offer local support across the country. Penny Brohn UK can give you information about appropriate, balanced and nutritious diets for people with cancer.

**Tel:** 0303 3000 118 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 5.00pm)

**Website:** <https://www.pennybrohn.org.uk/>

**Email:** [info@pennybrohn.org.uk](mailto:info@pennybrohn.org.uk) or [helpline@pennybrohn.org.uk](mailto:helpline@pennybrohn.org.uk)

### Cancer Research

An independent cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research, influence and information.

**Tel:** 0300 123 1022 (Monday to Friday, 8am – 6pm (Closed between 11.00-11.30am on Wednesdays), 0808 800 4040 (Freephone, to talk to a nurse)

**Website:** <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/>

**Department of Psychological Services (Cancer Psychological Services) - Hull and East Yorkshire**

<https://www.heyr.nhs.uk/queens/cancerpsychologicalservice/>