Although it seems impossible even tinnitus patients can learn how to relax

* The ANS has two branches: the **sympathetic nervous system** (SNS) and the **parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)**
* The sympathetic nervous system activates our body – the parasympathetic nervous system calms it down
* Normally they both balance each other
* When we suffer from anxiety caused by tinnitus the SNS learns to dominate.

**However, too much activation increases anxiety**

* To reduce anxiety we need to engage the parasympathetic nervous system; how?

**!!!engage in activities which make you feel good!!! (identify these activities and keep doing them)**

* Parasympathetic nervous system has a counter-balance to the fight-or-flight response flight response named by Herbert Benson
* The relaxation response slows down breathing helps to lower heart rate and metabolism (inhale on 4, exhale on 6)

**7 Principles of Relaxation**

**1. Breathing rhythmically**; deep, deliberate and focus breathing diverts your attention to breathing (away from tinnitus)and promotes relaxation

**2.** **Focused attention**. Tinnitus anxiety increases in anticipation of the future which is always predicted and worrisome. Focused and structured attention activates frontal lobes which help to inhibit over activity of the amygdala (LS). Practice focus point (breathing, mantra, music, etc)

**3**. **Quiet environment,** no destruction, stay focused

**4**. **Acceptance of nonjudgmental attitude;** abandoning rigid attitude towards expectations, acceptance of realistic outcome and reality as is rather than fear of what it could be. Trying sometimes too hard produces more stress and does not allow for relaxation. Accept an attitude that it is OK to accept “whatever happens”. Accepting “the here and now” instead of fearing the predictive future you free yourself from pressures and you will become more relaxed

**5**. **Relaxed posture**; standing, sitting, laying

**6**. **Observation**; observe each experience before reacting to it. Do not react impulsively to tinnitus. Hold your compulsion to react to each tinnitus event immediately. Look at it as an outside observer, does it really “deserve” to have such a strong reaction, can it be dealt differently and not compulsively. Look at it “from a distance” and judge how you should react to it. Taking a vantage point of an observer rather than a victim allows to be more objective about the tinnitus

**7**. **Labeling**; do not label your tinnitus without considering alternatives. It is not a catastrophic event if you allow your left frontal lobe to access your previous experience and judge this new experience accordingly. Example, I remember having tinnitus on several occasions in the past and they all went away and it did not harmed me. I heard about other people talking about tinnitus and how they accepted it and live a normal life (allow your new patient to contact your old patient)