Learning to Relax

Instructions: Two of the most convenient techniques you can use in the effort to relax are relaxation imagery and muscular relaxation. Both initially require a quiet place and time where you will not be interrupted.

1. A reclining chair or a couch where you can make yourself comfortable is preferred.
2. Lower or turn off bright lights.
3. With your eyes closed, tense and then relax your muscles in this order:
   - Face
   - Neck and shoulders
   - Biceps and triceps
   - Forearms
   - Wrists and hands
   - Chest
   - Abdomen
   - Buttocks/hamstrings
   - Quadriceps
   - Calves
   - Ankles and feet
4. Once completely relaxed, imagine a peaceful setting in which you feel calm. Learn to hold this image for as long as you can.
5. Imagine your speech class. If you feel any sign of anxiety, return to the preceding image.
6. Continue to imagine your speech class and add yourself to the picture. See yourself calmly seated, enjoying others as they speak.
7. See yourself writing down the requirements of an assigned speech. See yourself involved with the various stages of preparation, including seeing yourself practice.
8. See yourself waiting to be called on, aroused but not anxious.
9. See yourself speaking energetically, gesturing and using your eyes, face and voice.
10. See students and your instructor listening attentively.
11. See yourself concluding and your audience responding with genuine applause.
12. Practice this series of steps at least twice a week for between 15 and 25 minutes each time.
13. Remember that any time you begin to feel anxious during this exercise, replace whatever image you’re holding with a pleasant and relaxing one.