



More MH Counseling
Make More Happen

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is an evidence-based exercise that benefits people who are experiencing physical pain from being tense due to anxiety and stress. Research has shown that practicing progressive muscle relaxation several times per week can improve stress, anxiety, sleep, and pain.

You progressively go through various muscle groups throughout your body, tensing each muscle for 5-10 seconds and then stating out loud a trigger word of “relax” or “release” that then allows you to feel your muscle in a relaxed state. For a longer relaxation session, you can repeat each muscle group up to 3 times

There are a couple of other benefits that I feel you can get from practice progressive muscle relaxation 1) increasing insight into your body so you can identify when you're feeling tense and 2) increasing your mind body control so that when your mind tells your body to relax, it will.

Before we begin, when tensing your muscle should not cause any pain or discomfort. If you have any injuries or pain, you can skip those affected areas.

Now find a comfortable position either sitting or lying down in a place that is relaxing and that you won't be interrupted or distracted. Keep your focus on your body and it's state of relaxation. If your mind wanders off, bring it back to the muscle you are working on.

Let's begin with a few slow deep breaths, in from your nose and out from your mouth. It's important to do diaphragmatic breathing, meaning it's coming from deep in your belly and not your chest. Take notice as you breath that your stomach is rising and your lungs filing with air.

As you exhale, imagine the tension in your body being released and flowing out of your body. And again inhale.....and exhale. Feel your body already relaxing.

As you go through each step, remember to keep breathing .

Now let's begin. Tighten the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can. Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and abruptly release feeling that tension fall away.

Now smile widely, feeling your mouth and cheeks tense. Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and abruptly release appreciating the softness in your face.

Next, tighten your eye muscles by squinting your eyelids tightly shut. Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and abruptly release feeling that tension fall away.

Gently pull your head back as if to look at the ceiling. Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and feel your head and neck in a relaxed state

Breath in...and out. In...and out.. letting go of all the tension.
Let go of all the stress In...and out.

Now, clench your fists tightly. Hold it for five seconds. Say “relax” and feel the tension fall away. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your fingers and hand.

Flex your biceps and feel the buildup of tension. You may even visualize that muscle tightening. Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and enjoying that feeling of limpness.

Now tighten your triceps by extending your arms out and locking your elbows. Hold it for five seconds, and “relax.”

Now lift your shoulders up as if they could touch your ears. Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and feel the heaviness that you were holding in your shoulders.

Breath in...and out. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax.

Tense your upper back by pulling your shoulders back trying to make your shoulder blades touch. Hold it as tight as hard as you can without straining for five seconds... now “relax.”

Tighten your chest by taking a deep breath in, Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and blow out all the tension.

Now tighten the muscles in your stomach by sucking in. Imagine that you are trying to touch your belly button to your spine. Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and notice the sensation of relief that comes from letting go.

Gently arch your lower back. Hold it for five seconds. Now let go and “relax.” Feel the limpness in your upper body letting go of the tension and stress.

Tighten your buttocks. Hold it for five seconds. Now say the word “relax” and imagine your hips falling loose.

Tighten your thighs by pressing your knees together, as if you were holding a penny between them. Hold it for five seconds and now “relax”

Now flex your feet, pulling your toes towards you and feeling the tension in your calves. Hold it for five seconds. Now “relax” and feel the weight of your legs sinking down

Curl your toes under tensing your feet. Hold it for five seconds. Now “relax” and release.

Imagine a wave of relaxation slowly spreading through your body beginning at your head and going all the way down to your feet. Feel the weight of your relaxed body.

Breathe in...and out...in...out....in...out.

Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving your muscles. Stretch your muscles and open your eyes when you're ready.