

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1	Get comfortable in a distraction free environment. You can either lay down or sit upright in a chair. Closing your eyes will help you focus on the different muscle groups, but you do not have to if you don't want to! For all steps, hold the tense position for a couple of deep breaths, or however long is comfortable for you, then relax. Repeat each step three times.
2	Draw a deep breath in through your nose and feel your abdomen rise as you fill your body with air. Then slowly exhale from your mouth, pulling your belly-button towards your spine.
3	Start with your feet. Clench your toes with your heel pressing towards the ground. Squeeze tightly for a couple of breaths and then release. It may help to say 'relax' whilst you release the tension. Next, flex your feet with your toes pointing towards your head.
4	Next move to your legs. Stretch your leg out, with your toes pointing towards the sky, feel the back of your leg tightening. Hold this for a couple of deep breaths and then release. Then, point your toes down into the ground with your leg straight for a couple of deep breaths.
5	Now move onto your glutes. Squeeze your buttocks muscles for a couple of deep breaths. Remember, you should only feel tension and not pain.
6	To tense your stomach and chest, pull your belly button in towards your naval as tight as you can. Breath in deeply, filling up your chest and lungs with air.
7	Next, tense your shoulder blades and back. Push your shoulder blades backwards, as if you are trying to get them to touch. This will push your chest forwards.
8	Now tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
9	Be careful when tensing your neck muscles! Face forward, and <u>SLOWLY</u> pull your head back to look up at the ceiling.
10	Open your mouth as wide as you can, as if you are yawning, to tense your mouth and jaw.
11	To tense your eyes and cheeks, squeeze your eyes tight shut.
12	Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as if you were surprised, to tense your forehead.
13	To tense your upper arms, bring your forearms up to your shoulder to 'make a muscle'.
14	Finally, to tense your hand and forearm, make fists with both of your hands.

Practice means progress. Only through practice can you become more aware of how your muscles respond to tensions and relaxation. Training your body to respond differently to stress is like any training – practice is the key!

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