

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a way to **reduce tension**. In this method, you focus on slowly tensing and relaxing muscle groups.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation helps you notice when you feel tense so you can relax your muscles. Studies have shown that this method may **reduce stress levels, fatigue, and headaches**. It can improve sleep and quality of life.

Before You Start:

- Set aside at least 15 minutes.
- Find a place where you will not be bothered.
- Find an area where you can lie down and stretch out.
- Do this exercise twice every day for the first few weeks.
- Decide whether you want to start from your feet to your head or the reverse.
- **Make sure you do not hurt yourself**. You should not feel intense or shooting pain. If you have medical issues that affect physical activity, **ask your doctor before trying this**.

Steps:

1. Take a slow, deep breath in and tense the first muscle group. You should tense hard but not to the point of pain or cramping. The table below shows how to do this for each muscle group. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.
2. After 5 seconds, exhale and quickly relax the tensed muscle. You should feel the muscle become loose.
3. Stay in this relaxed state for about 15 seconds. It is important to notice the difference between how your muscles feel when tensed and when relaxed.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 for each muscle group. Move from your feet to head or head to feet.
5. When you are done, count backwards from 5 to focus back on the present.

Practice:

Remember to practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation often. This will make the exercise easier and more useful. Eventually, you will notice when your muscles are tensed and know to relax. This skill will help you manage your anxiety and stress.

Muscle Groups

Muscle Group	What to Do
Feet	Curl your toes downward.
Lower legs	Tighten your calf muscle by pulling your toes towards your face
Thighs	Clench your thigh muscles tightly.
Buttocks	Tighten by clenching your buttocks together tightly.
Stomach	Suck your stomach in tightly.
Back	Arch your back up and away from the floor.
Chest	Take a very deep breath. Hold it for 5-10 seconds.
Shoulders	Shrug them (raise towards your ears).
Biceps and upper arms	Clench your hands into fists. Then bend your arms at the elbow and flex your bicep.
Wrists and forearms	Extend them and bend your hands back at the wrists.
Hands	Clench your fists.
Front of neck	Touch your chin to your chest.
Back of neck	Press the back of your head against the floor.
Around the mouth	Press your lips together tightly.
Cheeks and jaw	Smile as widely as you can.
Around eyes	Close your eyes as tightly as you can.
Forehead	Wrinkle it into a frown. Then raise your eyebrows as high as you can.