

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

PURPOSE

Intentionally tensing and releasing muscles reduces tension and relaxes the body. Focusing on specific muscle groups helps clients become more aware of their bodies and the presence or absence of tension.

INSTRUCTIONS

Progressive muscle relaxation involves the tensing and releasing of muscles in the body to initiate the relaxation response. Clients should be encouraged to do relaxation breathing after each muscle group is tensed and released.

Short Targeted Format:

Get into a comfortable position.

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Clench your hands (or any tense area of the body) and hold them tightly while keeping the rest of your body relaxed.

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Hold for 10 seconds. "One, two, three ... hold it tight ... eight, nine, ten, and release."

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Notice how your hands feel loose and relaxed.

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Breathe in slowly.

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Exhale slowly, imagining the tension leaving your body.

6

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REPEAT

Full Body Format:

Using the tense and release procedure from the short format, start with the feet and move up the body, tensing and releasing major muscle groups or tense areas of the body, ending with muscles in the face.

Do each area once and take five slow breaths after each tense and release, imagining tension leaving the body on the exhale. This practice is helpful at night to induce relaxation and sleep.