

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Before you begin

Get in a comfortable position. You may want to lay flat on a bed or couch with arms out slightly away from your sides. Or sit in a comfortable chair with your feet on the floor and your hands either flat in your lap or placed on the arms of the chair. Regardless of the position, make sure your legs and feet are not crossed and that your body (including your neck) is well supported.

Determine your SUDS (Subjective Unit of Distress Scale): on a scale from 0 (“no stress at all”) to 10 (“the most stressed you have ever been”), what is your stress level right now?

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Close your eyes if that is comfortable for you. Start by taking a few slow deep breaths. Notice the air as it enters your nose and goes down to your lungs. Continue to take note of the air as you exhale. Enjoy the cool air as you inhale. Feel the warm moist air as you exhale. Cool air on the inhale; warm air on the exhale. Continue this focus for 8 more breaths.

Now begin to focus on different areas of the body while you continue your deep breaths. With each inhale you will focus your attention on a specific area of the body and relax that area. With each exhale, you will relax that area even more and let go of all tension stored in the muscles in those areas of the body. Then move on to the next area of the body.

When you are ready, open your eyes feeling refreshed and revived.

When you are finished

Re-rate your SUDS. How much lower did your stress level go?

Here are the areas of the body to relax one area at a time

- Relax your head: from the top of your head, along the back and all the way to the top of your neck
- Relax your forehead and the muscles around your eyes
- Relax your cheekbones and ears
- Deeply relax the muscles in your jaw and mouth. You may notice that your teeth and lips become slightly parted. That is fine
- Relax your neck and shoulders
- Focusing on your right arm, relax your upper arm; your elbow; your forearm; your hand; and each of your fingers on the right side
- Focusing on your left arm, relax your upper arm; your elbow; your forearm; your hand; and each of your fingers on the left side
- Relax your upper back
- Relax your chest area
- Relax your abdominal area, your stomach
- Relax your lower back
- Relax your thigh muscles down to the knees
- Relax your calf muscles
- Relax your feet and toes