

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a very popular technique. During this activity you will progress through your body, repeatedly tensing and then relaxing each part. One of the advantages to this technique is you can feel the difference between the sensations of tension and relaxation. It teaches you to recognize when you are tense in order to know when you need to relax. At first, it works best if you have someone read the script out loud to you. After you have done it a few times and know the procedure, then you can do it on your own. You should set aside about 20 minutes to be able to complete the whole thing. When you see “. . .” you should pause for three to four seconds.

Procedure

1. *Begin by lying on our back on a comfortable surface. Close your eyes and take two slow, deep breaths*
2. *Tighten all of the muscles up and down your right leg until you reach 90 percent tension. You may point your toes either toward or away from your body or raise your foot an inch off of the floor to increase the tension. Hold this tension for ten seconds . . . study the tension . . . notice what it feels like . . . feel it . . . and then repeat to yourself “relax” and slowly allow your leg to relax. Feel the tension flow out of your leg onto the surface that you are lying on. . . Feel the difference in your leg now . . . Inhale slowly, expanding your lower belly. . . pause, and then exhale.*
3. *Repeat step #2 again for your right leg, paying careful attention to the sensations of tension and relaxation. Feel the difference between the tightness and the looseness. . . Inhale slowly and deeply . . . and then exhale.*
4. *Tighten the muscles up and down your left leg. . . Slowly bring the tension to 90% . . . hold it for 10 seconds . . . Notice the feelings of muscle tightness as you hold it . . . and then repeat to yourself “relax” and slowly allow the tension to drain away. . . Note the sensations that accompany relaxation . . . You may feel a heaviness . . . a lightness . . . a warmth . . . a tingling . . . or maybe other feelings of relaxation. . . Inhale slowly and comfortably, expanding your lower belly . . . pause . . . and then exhale.*
5. *Repeat step #4 again for the left leg . . . inhaling and exhaling deeply at the end.*
6. *Now tighten you buttocks muscles to 90 percent, holding the tension. . . remember to keep al of the other muscles in your body relaxed . . . Hold this tension for 10 seconds. Study the tension in this area . . . Now repeat to yourself the word “relax” and slowly let go of the tension. . . Let the tension flow out. . . Notice the change in sensations as relaxation replaces the tightness. Feel the looseness. . . Inhale deeply and comfortably, pause, and exhale.*
7. *Repeat step # 6 for your buttocks muscles. Continue with deep, slow breathing at the end. . .*
8. *Turn your attention to your stomach or abdominal area. . . Tighten these muscles. . . notice the sensations of tightness . . . hold the tension for 10 seconds while*

- everything else in your body stay relaxed and loose. . . Then repeat the word “relax” to yourself and allow the tension to flow out of you. Feel the stomach muscles soften and relax as the looseness enters in. Inhale deeply . . . pause . . . and then exhale comfortably.*
9. *Repeat # 8 again for your abdominal muscles. Take two slow, deep breathes afterwards.*
 10. *Tighten all of the muscles in your chest and across your back. pushing your shoulder blades back and together can help to increase the tension. . . . As you hold this tension, study it . . . become aware of what tension in this part of your body feels like. . . . After 10 seconds say “relax” and slowly allow your chest and back to relax. . . . Feel the looseness, warmth, lightness, heaviness, or other sensations of relaxation flow into these muscles. . . . Inhale deeply and comfortably . . . pause . . . and exhale.*
 11. *Repeat step # 10 again for your chest and back. . . breathe easy and comfortably. . . in and out. . .*
 12. *Tighten the muscles in both of your arms, slowly bringing the tension to 90 percent. Make fists with your hands to feel the tension pulsing up and down your arms. Notice the tension in all of these muscles . . . Hold this tension and then “relax,” letting the tightness slowly flow out of your arms, down from your shoulders . . . through your upper arms . . . down through your lower arms . . . and out through your hands and finger tips. Study the relaxation as it replaces the tension . . . Breathe deeply and comfortably . . . and breathe out . . . in . . . and out . . .*
 13. *Repeat step # 12 for your arms followed by continued deep, slow breathing.*
 14. *Now turn to your neck. Tighten these muscles by pressing down with your head into the underlying surface. Notice the tightness. What does it feel like? . . . Feel it for 10 seconds . . . and then “relax.” Allow your neck muscles to soften and relax. Let the underlying surface to completely support the weight of your head. . . Inhale deeply, expanding your lower belly . . . pause . . .and then exhale slowly.*
 15. *Repeat step # 14 for the muscles in your neck. Remember to keep all of the other muscles in your body relaxed. When you are finished take two more deep, slow breaths.*
 16. *Tighten your jaw muscles by clenching your teeth together hard. . . Feel the tightness in this area. . . . hold it for 10 seconds and repeat that word to yourself “relax.” . . . and slowly let your jaw go limp. Let your lips relax and your mouth open slightly . . . feel the difference in this area. . . .Inhale and exhale slowly and comfortably.*
 17. *Repeat step # 16 for your jaw muscles, taking several deep breaths at the end.*
 18. *Tighten the muscles in your whole face, including your jaw. Grimace, frown your brow, clench your teeth, and hold this tension. . . . Hold this tension . . . Feel it . . . and then “relax,” and allow the tension to drain away from your face. Let your forehead and cheek muscles soften. Let your jaw relax again . . . Notice the sensations of relaxation filling your face. Feel the difference as you inhale deeply . . . and then exhale.*
 19. *Repeat step # 18 for your face and jaw, remembering to keep the other muscles in your body relaxed and breathing deeply at the end.*

20. *Now tighten all of the muscles in your entire body to 90 percent tension. . . . Tighten your legs, arms, buttocks, abdomen, chest, back, neck, jaws, and face . . . hold this tension and focus on it. . . then repeat that word to yourself, “relax,” and let the tension slowly drain away from your body. . . . Imagine all of the tension being replaced by feelings of relaxation. . . Study the difference. . . Breathe in slowly . . . pause . . . and then exhale.*
21. *Repeat # 20 for your entire body, tighten every muscle. . . Hold the tension and then “relax” . . . notice the feelings of relaxation spread into every part of your body and into every muscle. . .*
22. *Do a mental scan of your body. If any areas still feel tense, tighten those muscles once more, holding the tension and then letting them relax again. . . Continue to breathe deeply and slowly.*

After a lot of practice with this, eventually you won't need to go through the entire procedure. In the heat of the moment all you will have to do is say “relax” to yourself and your body will respond by loosening up and relaxing.