

Relaxation Script

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Tensing your muscles or ‘bracing’ against pain is a common reaction. It’s also a common reaction to stress or worry, which can come along as part and parcel of any life with persistent pain in it.

This simple technique can help by:

- 1 Making it easier to notice when muscles are tense
- 2 Softening and relaxing those tight muscles
- 3 Changing blood flow around the body, and helping us produce more of the “relaxation response” (*Nature’s way of helping us wind down if running, fighting or fleeing does not solve the problem*)

Progressive relaxation:

Preparation

Sit comfortably. Make sure your arms and legs are not crossed, and try to find a place and time where you won’t be interrupted. Remove glasses if you wear them, and loosen any tight clothing.

Start at your feet and work up to the top of your head. For each muscle group you are going to first tighten the muscles, then release them as you breathe out, and think the word “relax” to yourself. If tightening any part of your body is too uncomfortable, you can choose to skip that part and relax/let go without tightening the muscle group first.

Feet and calves:

Flex your feet (pull toes toward the knees)

Contract calf muscles and muscles of lower leg

Feel the tension build and hold the tension

Take a deep breath

As you breathe out say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

Knees and upper thighs:

Straighten your knees and squeeze your legs together

Tighten your thigh muscles

Let the tension build, breathe in, then let things go on the out breath as you think the word RELAX.

Hips and buttocks

Tense the buttock muscles by squeezing them inward and upward

Let the tension build, breathe in, then let things go on the out breath as you think the word RELAX.

Abdomen

Observe your abdomen rising and falling with each breath

Inhale and press your navel toward the spine then tense the abdomen

Let the tension build, breathe in, then let things go on the out breath as you think the word RELAX.

Upper back

Draw the shoulder blades together to the midline of the body

Contract the muscles across the upper back

Let the tension build, breathe in, then let things go on the out breath as you think the word RELAX.

Arms and Palms of the Hands

Turn palms face down and make a tight fist in each hand

Raise and stretch both arms with fists

Let the tension build, breathe in, then let things go on the out breath as you think the word RELAX.

Chin, Neck, and Shoulders

Drop your chin to your chest

Draw your shoulders up toward your ears

Let the tension build, breathe in, then let things go on the out breath as you think the word RELAX.

Jaw and Facial muscles

Clench your teeth together

Tense the muscles in the back of your jaw

Turn the corners of your mouth into a tight smile

Wrinkle the bridge of your nose and squeeze your eyes shut

Tense all facial muscles in toward the center of your face

Let the tension build, breathe in, then let things go on the out breath as you think the word RELAX.

Forehead

Raise eyebrows up and tense the muscles across the forehead and scalp

Let the tension build, breathe in, then let things go on the out breath as you think the word RELAX.

Scanning down for any tension

Imagine a scanner passing down your body from the crown of your head to the tips of your toes. As you move your awareness down look for any remaining tension and try to relax and soften those muscles. Take as long as you like to do this, and you can re-do the tensing and relaxing part for any really stubborn tension spots.

Finishing off

Let your breathing be natural and relaxed – don't try to deep breathe

Count backwards in your head from 3 to 1

- 3 Become aware of your surroundings (location, people, noises)
- 2 Move your feet, legs, hands, arms, rotate your head
- 1 Open your eyes feeling re-energized, refreshed, and relaxed

Resources:

For full text of the tension and relaxation exercise above:

<http://www.med.umich.edu/painresearch/patients/Relaxation.pdf>

www.headspace.com

"Take 10" programme: 10 day free programme available for download, guided mindfulness training for 10 minutes per day. You will need internet access and a device with speakers (smart phone, iPad, desktop computer etc).

<http://www.calm.auckland.ac.nz>

Follow tabs to "Managing Stress, Anxiety and Depression" then click on "Practical Techniques for Managing Stress" for a list of links including guided meditation and mindfulness of breath, as well as a body scan.