

Progressive Relaxation

This procedure requires a quiet environment, a passive attitude, and a comfortable position.

Directions:

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Let yourself relax.
4. Pay attention to your breathing. Let it flow in and out through your nose. Don't try to control it. Just observe the flow of air and the muscle movement in your chest, diaphragm, and stomach.
5. After about a minute or so, begin tensing/relaxing different parts of your body following the sequence below. Hold each part tensed for approximately six seconds, relax the area and spend 15-20 seconds sensing the relaxation coming into the part of the body previously tensed. Do not worry if you forget part of the sequence or alter it. The important thing is to become aware of the difference between the sensation of muscle tension and relaxation.

Sequence: Head to Toe or Toes to Head

1. Tense and relax the forehead by frowning.
2. Tense and relax the eyes by squinting.
3. Tense and relax the neck by pushing the head down.
4. Tense and relax the neck by bringing the chin down toward the chest.
5. Tense and relax the tongue by pushing it against the roof of the mouth.
6. Tense and relax the jaw by clenching the teeth together.
7. Tense and relax the mouth by squeezing your lips tightly together.
8. Tense and relax the right hand by making a fist.
9. Tense and relax the right upper arm by bending it at the elbow and bringing the hand up to the shoulder.
10. Tense and relax the left hand. Same as in 8.
11. Tense and relax the left upper arm. Same as in 9.
12. Tense and relax the shoulders by lifting them up.
13. Tense and relax the chest by pushing up with the chest.
14. Tense and relax the back by arching the back up.
15. Tense and relax the stomach by drawing it in towards the backbone.
16. Tense and relax the stomach by pushing it out.
17. Tense and relax the upper part of the right leg by lifting it 6" off the ground.
18. Tense and relax the right calf by bending the big toe towards the knee.
19. Tense and relax the right foot and calf by scrunching the toes down towards the heel.

20. Tense and relax the left upper leg. Same as in 17.
21. Tense and relax the left foot – toes up. Same as in 18.
22. Tense and relax the left foot – toes down. Same as in 19.

Sequence: Circular

1. Right foot – toes up & down
2. Right upper leg
3. Stomach – in & out
4. Back
5. Chest
6. Right hand
7. Right upper arm
8. Right shoulder
9. Neck – head back & chin down
10. Jaw
11. Tongue
12. Lips
13. Eyes
14. Forehead

Then back up the list beginning with forehead and going down the left side of the body.

Now, gently without tensing, go through the body sequence above letting the relaxation come into each part. Take your time. Focus a little longer in areas that seem tense before moving on to the rest of your body.

Then, just let yourself lie quietly enjoying the relaxation, feeling calm and contented. If you lose your attention on your body, it is okay as long as you let your mind just float along. Don't get involved in thinking.

Allow 10-20 minutes for the whole experience. Don't use an alarm clock. You can open your eyes, however, to check the time. When you finish, slowly bring your attention back to the room by listening to the sounds in the room and surrounding area. Become aware of your body and gradually move your hands and/or feet to begin to feel some movement. After a minute or so, open your eyes slowly, taking time to readjust them to the light and surrounding stimuli. Sit up, if lying down, and hold that position for a little time. If sitting, you can stand up, but do so without haste.

It is better to practice twice a day but once is sufficient. Even if you have a difficult time relaxing sometimes, don't give up, as practice is important. Gradually the distractions you experience will become less demanding.