



Give us a break!

Resource sheet 9 Progressive muscle relaxation

1. Make yourself comfortable, lying or sitting down.
2. Now close your eyes and be aware of the sounds around you (10 second pause).
3. Become aware of your breathing and notice that breathing in makes a different sound to breathing out (15 second pause).
4. Now clench both hands into tight fists and take a deep breath at the same time, holding it in for a count of 5 – one, two, three, four, five. Relax and breathe out slowly.
5. Let your hands and arms relax completely as you breathe slowly and smoothly. Notice the feeling of heaviness that follows relaxation. Notice how comfortably heavy your arms feel when you let them relax. Relaxed and heavy; heavy and relaxed.
6. Now focus on your face muscles. Close your eyes tightly and feel the tension (5 second pause) and then relax, without opening your eyes. Keep your eyes lightly and comfortably closed and notice the feeling of relaxation in your eyes and forehead.
7. Feel your whole face relaxing – your forehead – your eyes – your jaw – your tongue – and lips. Notice the feeling of warmth that comes with the relaxation. Your whole face is warm and heavy and relaxed.
8. Now press your head back or down as far and as hard as possible against the floor or cushion – and notice the tension in your neck – and relax. Put your head in a comfortable position again and notice the relaxed feeling. Let this relaxation deepen in your throat and neck.
9. Now pull up your shoulders towards your ears, keeping your arms and face relaxed – feel the tension in your shoulders – and relax. Breathe slowly and smoothly. Notice the comfortable feeling of having your shoulders relaxed and heavy.
10. Now focus on the lower part of your body.
11. Tense your seat and thigh muscles by pressing your heels down against the floor as hard as possible (5 second pause) – relax and notice the difference.
12. Now tense your calf muscles by pressing your toes away from your face; push your toes down and away. Notice the tension in your calf muscles. And relax your feet and calf muscles. Feel the difference.



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Resource sheet 9 Continued

13. Now tense the muscles around your shins by pulling your toes up, pointing them towards your face (pause) – and relax. Continue to relax for a while, letting heaviness and warmth spread throughout the lower part of your body. Feel relaxed and heavy; heavy and relaxed.
14. Now pull your stomach muscles in and be aware of tension. Keep breathing with your chest. And relax. Notice how you begin to breathe naturally with your stomach. Breathe even more with your stomach and notice how relaxed your chest and stomach feel.
15. Use stomach breathing and feel your stomach and chest becoming warm, heavy and relaxed. Breathe slowly and smoothly and notice the difference between breathing in and out – feel your relaxation increasing as you breathe out.
16. Breathe in and fill your lungs. Take a deep breath and hold it. Hold your breathe and feel the tension increasing in your chest and stomach. And breathe out. Feel yourself relaxing; let your chest muscles become loose, letting the air out without any effort. Notice the relaxed feeling of heaviness and warmth that follows each time you breathe out.
17. Keep relaxing; breathing slowly and smoothly with your stomach. Relax your chest and shoulder muscles, letting your stomach rise with every breath in and allowing your stomach to sink slowly and smoothly with every breath out. Let your relaxation deepen with every breath out. Don't try to relax – just let it happen. (pause 30 secs).
18. Each time you practise this way you will be able to relax more deeply. You will feel a deeper relaxation and it will take a shorter time to relax each time you practise. You will learn the difference between tense and relaxed muscles and what relaxation really means. You will also notice a feeling of calmness which comes each time you relax. Relaxation helps you to be more calm and confident, each time you practise. After each session you will feel rested and alert and you will be able to keep your good feelings of calmness and confidence.
19. Feel yourself becoming more alert now. Before you open your eyes, take some really deep breaths and stretch your whole body like a cat. Feel completely alert and well in every way as you open your eyes.