



## Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

This handout offers you information on a progressive muscle relaxation exercise. This exercise allows you to learn the feelings you have when your muscles are tense (tight) or when they are relaxed.

This can help you:

- Reduce tension and stress in your body.
- Relax when you feel anxious.

Read the steps below before doing this exercise the first time. Start with doing the exercise once a week. Increase to 2 times a week and then to 3 times a week. Continue to do this exercise three times a week for the best results. You can also do it anytime you feel anxious or stressed.

### Steps for doing this exercise:

It will take about 15 to 30 minutes for you to do this exercise.

1. Find a quiet place in your home. Get into a comfortable position. You can sit, stand or lie down. You may want to loosen tight-fitting clothing and remove your shoes. Make sure your head is supported if you plan to sit or lay down.
2. For each of the muscles listed below, complete steps a, b, c and d.
  - a. Tighten the muscles and hold for about 10 seconds.
  - b. Notice the feelings of tightness and describe these feelings to yourself.
  - c. Relax (stop tightening) the muscles for about 30 seconds.
  - d. Notice the difference between tightening and relaxing your muscles.

### List of muscles

- Your eyes and nose. To tighten these muscles, close your eyes tight and scrunch up your nose.
  - Your forehead. To tighten these muscles, lift up your eyebrows as high as you can.
  - Your lips and lower jaw. To tighten these muscles, squeeze your lips tightly together and clench your teeth.
  - Your neck. Tighten these muscles by pressing your chin down into your chest.
  - Your hands, wrists, and forearms. Tighten these muscles by making a fist with your hands and then bending and pulling your wrists towards you (with the palm of your hands facing up).
  - Your shoulders. Tense the muscles by moving your shoulders upwards (shrug your shoulders).
  - Your chest. Tense these muscles by taking a deep breath and holding it.
  - Your upper legs. Tense these muscles by putting your knees together and lifting your legs upwards. Your knees can be bent if this is more comfortable for you.
  - Your lower legs. Tense these muscles by pointing your toes out and curling them downwards.
3. Think about how each body part felt when it was relaxed. Take a deep breath. Get up slowly as you may feel lightheaded or dizzy for a few minutes.

This exercise will get easier with practice. Talk to a social worker if you have questions about this exercise.

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