

How to Perform Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle [relaxation](#) is a systematic technique for managing stress and achieving a deep state of relaxation. It was developed by Dr. Edmund Jacobson in the 1930s. He discovered that a muscle could be relaxed by first tensing it for a few seconds and then releasing it. Tensing and releasing various muscle groups throughout the body produces a state of relaxation. I provide you with detailed instructions on how to use this technique to improve your health and reduce stress.

1. Start by getting into a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Place the feet flat on the floor, legs uncrossed and your hands resting comfortably at your side or on your lap.
2. Reading the instructions below (the 'script'), allowing plenty of time for pauses, into a recorder and play it back for your use:
3. Begin by noticing your breathing, noticing your abdomen rise and fall with each breath. (Allow a pause) As your breathing becomes more relaxed and restful, take your awareness down to your feet. We will start this process with the muscles in the feet and toes. When I say 'tense' you will tense the muscles in the feet by curling the toes down and holding for a count of four full seconds and then will release the muscles in the feet when I say 'release', and will repeat this process two times in various muscle groups throughout the body. Ready...So, with your awareness in the feet and toes now tense the feet and hold for one... two... three...four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle as you go through the process. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the feet. With each tense and release cycle, you will notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group...Now again, bring your awareness to the feet and toes and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three...four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
4. Now, we will move our awareness to the lower legs... to the calf area. When I say 'tense', we will tense these muscles by pointing the toes towards the knees, and again holding for a count of three, and then releasing the calf muscles. Ready...So, with your awareness in the calf muscles now tense the calves and hold for one... two... three...four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle as you go through the process. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the calves. With each tense and release cycle, you will notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group...Now again, bring your awareness to the calves and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three...four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
5. Notice the muscles in the thighs. When I say 'tense', we will tense the muscles in the thighs by pressing the back of the legs in the bottom of the chair and holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready...So, with your awareness in the thighs now tense and hold for one... two... three...four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and

a relaxed muscle as you go through the process. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the thighs. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group...Now again, bring your awareness to the thighs and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three...four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.

6. Now, notice the muscles in the abdomen and low back. When I say 'tense', we will tense the muscles in the abdomen by imagining that we are trying to touch the belly button to the spine, pressing the low back to the chair and holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready...So, with your awareness in the abdomen, now tense and hold for one... two... three...four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle again. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the low back and abdomen. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group...Now again, bring your awareness to the abdomen, 'tense' and hold for one... two... three...four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
7. Bring your awareness to the muscles in the right arm. When I say 'tense', we will tense the muscles in the right arm by curling the arm up towards your bicep and holding it as if you are lifting a weight and holding it to your chest, holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready...So, with your awareness in the arm now tense and hold for one... two... three...four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle as you go through the process again. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the arm. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group...Now again, bring your awareness to the arm and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three...four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
8. Now, bring your awareness to the muscles in the right hand. When I say 'tense', we will tense the muscles in the right hand by clenching it into a tight fist, holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready...So, with your awareness in the hand, now tense and hold for one... two... three...four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle as you go through the process again. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the arm. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group...Now again, bring your awareness to the hand and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three...four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
9. Bring your awareness to the muscles in the left arm. When I say 'tense', we will tense the muscles in the left arm by curling the arm up towards your bicep and holding it as if you are lifting a weight and holding it to your chest, holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready...So, with your awareness in the arm now tense and hold for one... two... three...four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle as you go through the process again. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the arm. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group...Now, bring your awareness to the arm and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three...four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.

10. Now, bring your awareness to the muscles in the left hand. When I say 'tense', we will tense the muscles in the left hand by clenching it into a tight fist, holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready... So, with your awareness in the left hand, now tense and hold for one... two... three... four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed one. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the arm. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group... again, bring your awareness to the hand and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three... four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
11. Notice the muscles in the upper back, around the shoulder blades. When I say 'tense', we will tense the muscles in the upper back by pressing the shoulder blades together and holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready... So, with your awareness in the shoulder blades, now tense and hold for one... two... three... four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between tense and relaxed as you go through the process. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group... Now again, bring your awareness to the upper back and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three... four, and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
12. Notice the muscles in the shoulder area and neck. When I say 'tense' we will tense the muscles in the neck by pressing the shoulders towards the ears and holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready... So, with your awareness in the neck and shoulders, now tense and hold for one... two... three... four..., and 'release'. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle as you go through the process. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in this area... it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group... Now again, bring your awareness to the shoulders and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three... four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
13. Bring your awareness to the chin and jaw area. When I say 'tense' we will tense the muscles in the jaw by pressing the chin into the chest, gently and holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready... So, with your awareness in the chin and around the jaw area, now tense and hold for one... two... three... four..., and 'release'. Again, noticing the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle as you go through the process. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in this area. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group... Now again, bring your awareness to the jaw and 'tense' and hold for one... two... three... four..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
14. Now, bring your awareness to the facial muscles. When I say 'tense', please tense the muscles in the face by furrowing the brow and squeezing the muscles together as if you've just eaten a very tart, sour lemon and holding for a count of four seconds and then release. Ready... So, with your awareness in the face now tense and hold for one... two... three... four..., and 'release' all the muscles in the face. Notice the difference between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle as you go through the process. Remembering to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, releasing any residual tension in the face. With each cycle, you notice it becomes easier and easier to release and relax each muscle group... Now again, bring your awareness to the face, 'tense' and hold for one... two... three... face..., and release... inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.