



## Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR): INSTRUCTIONS 2e

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation** teaches you how to relax your muscles through a two-step process. First, you systematically tense particular muscle groups in your body, such as your neck and shoulders. Next, you release the tension and notice how your muscles feel when you relax them.

- Find a comfortable position, sitting or lying down, relaxing and settling the body
- Take a few deep breaths to relax
- Each time you breathe OUT you're letting go of tension, breathing out is letting go
- Soon I'll ask you to tighten (or clench) particular muscle-groups, and then let them release and relax as you breathe out....
- Clench your fists and tighten them, keep holding them, until almost painful
- BREATHE IN, keeping holding them for a few more seconds
- Now, let go as you breathe out...feeling the sensation of release, let go, let go, let go.. relax
- Now let's tighten your biceps and bring your arms up and elbows into your ribs & squeeze
- Again tighten until almost painful, holding them there
- BREATHE IN, keep holding
- Now, let go as you breathe out... let go... let go... let go.. relax
- Now screw up your face and lips, push your tongue to the roof of your mouth
- *BREATHE IN, hold briefly; now, let go as you breathe out*
- Raise your shoulders to your ears (like a turtle in his shell) and tighten
- *BREATHE IN, hold briefly; now, let go as you breathe out*
- Bring your shoulder blades back and tighten your back;
- *BREATHE IN, hold briefly; now, let go as you breathe out*
- Clench your tummy muscles (Abs)
- *BREATHE IN, hold briefly; now, let go as you breathe out*
- Now your thighs.. tense them
- *BREATHE IN, hold....let go as you breathe out*
- Calves now, clench
- *BREATHE IN, hold... let go as you breathe out*
- Lastly your feet, curl your feet and toes, tense them
- *BREATHE IN, hold briefly; now, let go as you breathe out*
- Let your whole body settle and relax as you let go
- Take a moment to scan your body and release any tension
- Awaken yourself by stretching and being aware of the room or space around you

### Selective Release

- You can focus on one muscle group at a time and release the tension in that area selectively.

## Further explanation

### *STEP ONE: Tension*

The first step is applying muscle tension to a specific part of the body. This step is essentially the same regardless of which muscle group you are targeting. First, focus on the target muscle group, for example, your left hand. Next, take a slow, deep breath and squeeze the muscles as hard as you can for about 5 seconds. It is important to really feel the tension in the muscles, which may even cause a bit of discomfort or shaking. In this instance, you would be making a tight fist with your left hand.

### *STEP TWO: Relaxing the Tense Muscles*

This step involves quickly relaxing the tensed muscles. After about 5 seconds, let all the tightness flow out of the tensed muscles. Exhale as you do this step. You should feel the muscles become loose and limp, as the tension flows out. It is important to very deliberately focus on and notice the difference between the tension and relaxation. This is an important part of the whole exercise. Remain in this relaxed state for about 5-15 seconds, and then move on to the next muscle group. Repeat the tension-relaxation steps. After completing all of the muscle groups, take some time to enjoy the deep state of relaxation.

## Quick Tense and Release.

- Once you have become familiar with the “tension and relaxation” technique, and have been practicing it for a couple weeks, you can begin to practise a very short version of progressive muscle relaxation. In this approach, you learn how to tense larger groups of muscles, which takes even less time. These muscle groups are:
  - Lower limbs (feet and legs)
  - Stomach and chest
  - Arms, shoulders, and neck
  - Face
- So instead of working with just one specific muscle group at a time (e.g., your stomach), you can focus on the complete group (your stomach AND chest). You can start by focusing on your breathing during the tension and relaxation.

## Release Only

- A good way to even further shorten the time you take to relax your muscles is to become familiar with the “release only” technique. One of the benefits of tensing and releasing muscles is that you learn to recognize what tense muscles feel like and what relaxed muscles feel like.
- Once you feel comfortable with the tension and relaxation techniques, you can start doing “release only”, which involves removing the “tension” part of the exercise.
- For example, instead of tensing your stomach and chest before relaxing them, try just relaxing the muscles. At first, the feeling of relaxation might feel less intense than when you tensed the muscles beforehand, but with practice, the release-only technique can be just as relaxing.