

# Progressive muscle relaxation.

This relaxation technique can teach you to notice when you are holding physical tension within your body. If practised frequently, it can teach your body how to enter a state of relaxation upon demand. This is particularly useful for people who notice they become tense when stressed or anxious.

For each stage of this exercise you are asked to tense and then relax a muscle group. Try to focus on the physical sensations, noting the transition and difference between tension and relaxation. If your mind wanders, this is natural, just gently prompt yourself to re-focus on the task.

**Note:** Do not tense yourself to the point of pain or discomfort and if you are unsure about your suitability for any part of this exercise, please consult a medical professional. Skip any muscle group which may be injured.



**Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.** Take several rounds of large, deep breaths, steadying your nervous system.

Systematically tense the following muscle groups for a period of **5–10 seconds** (we have included some tips on how to do this). Once done, release the muscles slowly, allowing the tension to flow out over a period of 5 seconds or so:

**Face:** Raise your eyebrows high, clench your eyelids shut and open your mouth as wide as you can.

**Neck and shoulders:** Raise your shoulders toward your earlobes, open your mouth slightly and stretch the corners of your mouth toward your ears.

**Chest:** Take a deep breath and make your chest as wide as you can.

**Stomach:** Tense your abs or suck your stomach in as far as you can.

**Arms:** Tense your bicep, clench your fist and draw your hand up toward your shoulder.

**Buttocks:** Pull your buttocks together.

**Top of the legs:** Squeeze your thigh muscles.

**Lower legs:** Direct your feet upwards by pulling your toes toward you.

**Feet:** Scrunch your toes.

At the end of the exercise, take a moment to take some more deep breaths and enjoy any feeling of relaxation in your body.