

## Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscular relaxation involves tensing and releasing muscle groups throughout the body. The relaxation of the muscles occurs through the process of tensing, then releasing the tension.

An important part of the procedure is to help you become more aware of when your muscles are tense and relaxed. You will be asked to concentrate on the feelings that accompany tension and relaxation. By becoming more aware of tension, you will also become more in tune with your body so that you will know when you need to relax!

There are 15 muscle groups to be tensed and released and it takes 20-30 minutes to complete the whole schedule. If you practice each day for a couple of weeks, you will learn which of your muscle groups get most tense. You can shorten the routine by concentrating on those muscle groups.

Take care not to squeeze any muscle group too tightly. This exercise should never cause pain.

You can do this relaxation exercise in a comfortable chair or lying down.

1. Tense the muscles in the right hand and lower arm, by drawing up your hand into a tight fist, like squeezing an orange. Clench the hand ... keep it tight ... feel the tension in the muscles as you pull hard.

Relax your hand after about 5-7 seconds.

Let your fingers uncurl and notice the sensations in your hand. Notice the way your muscles feel now, compared to how they felt when they were tensed. You may feel a tingling sensation. If not, tense and relax your hand again, and take even more notice of the different feelings.

2. Now press your elbow down against the arm of the chair or where you are lying. Do this without tensing the muscles of the hand and forearm. Feel the tension in your upper arm as the elbow presses down.

Maintain the tension for 5-7 seconds.

Now relax and focus your attention on the relaxing muscles. Feel the tension flowing out ... enjoy the pleasant feelings of the muscles unwinding ... experience the feeling of relaxation. If you don't feel your muscles relax, tense your arm again by pressing your elbow down for 5-7 seconds.

Tense and relax until you can feel the difference between when the muscles are tense and when they are relaxed.

Repeat for the process above for the following muscle groups: -

1. Making a fist with the right hand without tensing the upper arm.
2. Push the elbow of the right arm down against the arm of the chair, while keeping the hand relaxed.
3. Repeat for the left hand.
4. Raise the eyebrows.
5. Screw up the eyes and wrinkle nose.
6. Clench teeth and pull back the corners of the mouth.
7. Pull the chin down and press your head back against a support, tensing the neck muscles.
8. Draw the shoulders up.
9. Tighten the abdominal muscles (making the stomach hard).
10. Tense the thigh of your right leg.
11. Tense the thigh of your left leg.
12. Curl up the toes on each foot.

Practice the muscular relaxation each day for at least a couple of weeks.

**TRY THIS ONE WITH YOUR KIDS AS WELL -**

**EVEN IF YOU JUST DO THE FIRST COUPLE OF MINUTES OF THE EXERCISE,**

**I.E. CLENCH YOUR FIST AND THEN RELEASE THREE TIMES**