



Pillars Community Health

Healing. Caring. Educating.

Breathing Activity: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation involves alternating tension and relaxation in all of the body's major muscle groups and is used to regulate mood, decrease stress and anxiety, and improve sleep. Both children and adults can utilize Progressive Muscle Relaxation to relax body and mind. Follow the steps, tensing the muscles from your feet to your face for a few seconds each, then relax with a slow exhalation.

Find a quiet place free from distractions. Lie on the floor or recline in a chair, loosen any tight clothing, and rest your hands in your lap or on the arms of the chair. Take a few slow, even breaths.

Now, focus your attention on the following areas (careful to leave the rest of your body relaxed):

1. **Feet.** Squeeze the muscles in your feet by flexing your feet as you breathe in for 5 seconds. Feel the muscles becoming tighter and tenser. Then release the tension in your feet with a robust exhale. Notice the feeling of relaxation and continue to breathe slowly and evenly.
2. **Legs.** Straighten your legs and squeeze the muscles in your quadriceps as you breathe in for 5 seconds. Feel the muscles becoming tighter and tenser. Release the tension in your legs with a robust exhale.
3. **Buttocks.** Squeeze the muscles in your buttocks as you breathe in for 5 seconds. Release the buttocks with a robust exhale.
4. **Arms and hands.** Slowly draw both hands into fists. Pull your fists into your chest and hold for 5 seconds, squeezing as tight as you can. Then release the tension with an exhale.
5. **Neck and shoulders.** Tense the muscles in your neck and shoulders by raising your shoulders up toward your ears and hold for 5 seconds. Release the tension with an exhale. Notice the tension melting away.
6. **Jaw.** Tense the muscles in your jaw, holding for 5 seconds. Release the tension with an exhale.
7. **Face.** Squeeze the muscles in your face, scrunching your nose and mouth, as you breathe in for 5 seconds. Then release the tension in your face with a robust exhale.

Notice the feeling of relaxation and continue to breathe slowly and evenly.

Pillars Community Health provides health, social and educational services including Medical, Dental, Mental Health and Addictions, Domestic and Sexual Violence, Benefits Assistance, Prevention/Health Education and Outreach, and more. We envision communities where all people have equal access to the care they need, when they need it. Learn more at www.PillarsCommunityHealth.org, or call 708-745-5277.