

The Chill Spot



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that relaxes your mind and body by tensing and relaxation muscle groups one after the other throughout your entire body. You will tense each muscle group vigorously, but without straining, and then suddenly release the tension and feel the muscle relax. You will tense each muscle for about 5 seconds. If you have any pain or discomfort at any of the targeted muscle groups feel free to omit that step. Throughout this exercise you may visualize the muscles tensing and a wave of relaxation flowing over them as you release that tension. It is important that you keep breathing throughout the exercise.

1. Find a quiet place you will not be disturbed. Eliminate anything that might distract you for the next 20 minutes (e.g., silence your phone, turn off media, etc.).
2. Set a timer (e.g., phone, clock, etc.) for 20 minutes.
3. Sit comfortably in a chair or on a cushion on the floor keeping your back straight.
4. Close your eyes and take a deep breath through your nose and then exhale slowly to settle in.

5. Begin by tensing your feet. Curl your toes and flex your feet so that they are as tense as you can make them. Hold this for 5 seconds then release the tension. For the next 10 seconds, feel how relaxed your feet feel. Notice the difference from when they were tense.
6. Now do the same thing for your calves. Then your thighs. Move up through each major muscle group through your abdomen, back and chest.
7. After your chest, move from your fingers and hands through your forearm. Then your biceps and triceps.
8. Following that, tense your shoulders and then your neck.
9. Move on to your face starting with your jaw, then your lips followed by your tongue. Tense and relax your cheeks. Then squeeze your eyelids as tight as you can then release it. Move on to your eyebrows and then to your forehead.
10. After you have reached the top of your head continue to sit in a relaxed position for another 2 minutes, breathing in and exhaling slowly.
11. While you can take yourself through the progressive muscle relaxation exercise, many people find that it is easier if they are guided through this form of meditation. There are many good recordings of people going through a progressive muscle relaxation exercise. Here are a couple I thought were good:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZKNr-W9A1U>
http://media.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/p_muscle_relax.mp3

You can also find these on my website at:

<http://www.jamesgwellbornphd.com/teens/teen-links/h-z/#stress>