

## The Relaxation Procedure

Get into a comfortable position, take off your glasses or take out your contacts, close your eyes, and sit quietly for a few seconds, taking some slow, deep breaths.

1. Build up the tension in your lower arms by making fists with your hands and pulling up on your wrists. If your nails are long, press your fingers against your palms to make fists. Feel the tension through your lower arms, wrists, fingers, knuckles, and hands. Focus on the tension. Notice the sensations of pulling, of discomfort, of tightness. Hold the tension (10 seconds). Now release the tension and let your hands and lower arms relax onto the chair or bed, with your palms facing down. Focus your attention on the sensations of relaxation in your hands and arms. Feel the release from tension. Relax the muscles (20 seconds), and, as you relax, breathe smoothly and slowly from your abdomen. Each time you exhale, think the word "relax".
2. Now, build up the tension in your upper arms by pulling your arms back and in, toward your sides. Feel the tension in the back of your arms and radiating up into your shoulders and back. Focus on the sensations of tension. Hold the tension (10 seconds). Now, release your arms and let them relax. Focus on your upper arms, and feel the difference compared with the tension. Your arms might feel heavy, warm, and relaxed. As you relax (20 seconds), breathe smoothly and slowly from your abdomen. Each time you exhale, think the word "relax".
3. Now, build up the tension in your lower legs by flexing your feet and pulling your toes toward your upper body. Feel the tension as it spreads through your feet, ankles, shins, and calves. Focus on the tension spreading down the back of your leg, into your foot, under your foot, and around your toes. Concentrate on that part of your body (10 seconds). Now, release the tension. Let your legs relax heavily onto the chair or bed. Feel the difference in the muscles as they relax. Feel the release from tension, the sense of comfort, and the warmth and heaviness of relaxation (20 seconds). As you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word "relax" each time you exhale.
4. Build up the tension in your upper legs by pulling your knees together and lifting your legs off of the bed or chair. Focus on the tightness in your upper legs. Feel the pulling sensations from the hip down, and notice the tension in your legs. Focus on that part of your body (10 seconds). Now, release the tension, and let your legs drop down heavily onto the chair or bed. Let the tension go away. Concentrate on the feeling of relaxation. Feel the difference in your legs. Focus on the feeling of comfort (20 seconds), and as you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word "relax" each time you exhale.
5. Now, build up the tension in your stomach by pulling your stomach in toward your spine very tightly. Feel the tension. Feel the tightness, and focus on that part of your body (10 seconds). Now, let your stomach relax outwards. Let it go further and further. Feel the sense of warmth circulating across your stomach. Feel the comfort of relaxation (20 seconds). As you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word "relax" each time you exhale.
6. Now, build up the tension around your chest by taking a deep breath and holding it. Your chest is expanded, and the muscles are stretched around it. Feel the tension in your chest and back. Hold your breath (10 seconds). Now, slowly, let the air escape and breathe normally, letting the air flow in and out smoothly and easily. Feel the difference as the muscles relax compared with the tension, and think the word "relax" each time you exhale.
7. Imagine that your shoulders are on strings and are pulled up toward your ears. Feel the tension around your shoulders, radiating down into your back and up into your neck and back of your head. Focus on this part of your body. Concentrate on the sensations around your neck and shoulders (10 seconds), and then let your shoulders droop. Relax and let them droop further and further. Feel the sense of relaxation around your neck and shoulders. Concentrate on the sensation of relaxation (20 seconds) in this part of your body. As you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word "relax" each time you exhale.
8. Build up the tension around your neck by pressing the back of your neck toward the chair or bed and pulling your chin down toward your chest. Feel the tightness around the back of your neck spreading up into the back

of your head. Focus on the tension (10 seconds). Now, release the tension letting your head rest comfortably against the bed or chair. Concentrate on the relaxation (20 seconds), and feel the difference from the tension. As you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word “relax” each time you exhale.

9. Build up the tension around your mouth, jaw, and throat by clenching your teeth and forcing the corners of your mouth back into a forced smile (10 seconds). Feel the tightness and concentrate on the sensations. Then, release the tension letting your mouth drop open and the muscles around your throat and jaw relax. Concentrate on the difference in the sensations in that part of your body (20 seconds). As you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word “relax” each time you exhale.
10. Build up the tension around your eyes by squeezing your eyes tightly shut for a few seconds, and then releasing. Then, let the tension around your eyes slide away. Feel the difference as the muscles relax (20 seconds). As you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word “relax” each time you exhale.
11. Build up the tension across your lower forehead by frowning, pulling your eyebrows down and toward the center. Feel the tension across your forehead and top of your head. Concentrate on the tension (10 seconds), and then release, smoothing out the wrinkles and letting your forehead relax. Feel the difference as you relax (20 seconds). As you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word “relax” each time you exhale.
12. Build up the tension across your upper forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can. Feel the wrinkling and pulling sensations across your forehead and top of your head. Hold the tension (10 seconds), and then relax, letting your eyebrows rest and the tension leave. Concentrate on the sensations of relaxation, and feel the difference in comparison to tension. As you breathe smoothly and slowly, think the word “relax” each time you exhale.
13. Now your whole body is feeling relaxed and comfortable. As you feel yourself becoming even more relaxed count from one to five. One, letting all of the tension leave your body. Two, sinking further and further into relaxation. Three, feeling more and more relaxed. Four, feeling very relaxed. Five, feeling deeply relaxed. As you spend a few minutes in this relaxed state, think about your breathing. Feel the cool air as you breathe in and the warm air as you breathe out. Your breathing is slow and regular. Every time you breathe out, think the word “relax”. Now, count backward from five, gradually feeling yourself become more alert and awake. Five, feeling more awake. Four, coming out of relaxation. Three, feeling more alert. Two, opening your eyes. One, sitting up.

#### Outline for Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Choose a quiet location, with a comfortable chair or bed.
2. Loosen tight clothing, and remove glasses or contact lenses.
3. Tense for 10 seconds and relax for 20 seconds, repeating the word “relax” silently to yourself on each exhalation, for the following muscle groups.
  - a. Lower arms
  - b. Upper arms
  - c. Lower legs
  - d. Upper legs
  - e. Abdomen
  - f. Chest
  - g. Shoulders
  - h. Neck
  - i. Mouth, throat, and jaw
  - j. Eyes
  - k. Lower forehead
  - l. Upper forehead
4. Focus your attention on the sensations of tension and relaxation
5. After tensing and releasing the 16 muscle groups, count from 1 to 5 to deepen relaxation, and breathe slowly for 2 minutes, repeating the word “relax” with every exhalation. Then count from 5 to 1 to return to a state of alertness.