

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Rationale: PMR is a guided relaxation technique designed to increase awareness of tension throughout the body and allow it to be reduced. PMR also counteracts and blocks physiological responses to anxiety because it is impossible to be anxious and relaxed at the same time. The goal is to increase awareness of tension in order to reduce it. With practice, the relaxation occurs quicker and fewer muscles groups are needed.

Explanation: We are going to progress through 14 different muscle groups in your body. I'm going to ask you to tense a specific muscle and hold that tension. After several seconds, I'll instruct you to relax and release the tension noticing the difference between what tension and relaxation feels like. Muscles can only relax completely after they have been tensed. I want you to tense the muscle as hard as you can without it being painful.

- **Breathing:** start with an example of relaxed breathing. Remind them to pay attention to their breathing several times throughout the exercise.
 - *Place one hand on your stomach about an inch above your belly button. As you breathe in slowly, your stomach should expand. You're breathing in calm and relaxation. As you slowly exhale, breathe out the tension.*
- **Tense muscle for 5 seconds**
 - *"Hold the tension."*
 - *"Feel the tightness."*
 - *"Concentrate on the tension."*
- **Release and reflect for 15-20 seconds**
 - *"Now release the tension"*
 - *"Notice the difference between the tension and the relaxation."*
 - *"Feel the muscles grow soft and relaxed."*
 - *"Continuing to breathe easily."*

Fourteen-Muscle-Group Relaxation

1. Eyebrows: Raise them as high as you can like you're really surprised
2. Eyelids: Squeeze them together as tightly as you can, like looking into bright sunlight
3. Tongue: Push your tongue against the roof of your mouth
4. Mouth: Open your mouth as wide as you can
5. Neck: Push your head back like you are trying to stare at the ceiling
6. Neck: Push your head forward like you are trying to touch your chin to your chest
7. Shoulders: Lift them as high as you can like you are trying to touch your ears
8. Chest: Inhale deeply, try to completely fill your lungs. Hold for 10 seconds
9. Stomach: Suck your stomach in like you are trying to touch your spine
10. Upper arms: Push down on the surface where your arms are resting
11. Biceps: Pull your hands up toward your shoulders and flex your bicep
12. Lower arms: Tighten your hands into fists
13. Thighs: Put the balls of your feet on the ground and push down on the floor
14. Lower legs: Extend your legs in front of you with your feet pointing toward the ceiling

