

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)



Progressive muscle relaxation or PMR is an exercise that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle. This exercise can provide an immediate feeling of relaxation, but it's best to practice it frequently. With experience, you will become more aware of when you are experiencing tension and you will have the skills to help you relax.

During this exercise, each muscle should be tensed, but not to the point of strain. If you have any injuries or pain, you can skip the affected areas. Pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation.

Let's begin. Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so.

Begin by taking a deep breath in and noticing the feeling of air filling your lungs. Hold your breath for a few seconds.

*(brief pause)*

Release the breath slowly and let the tension leave your body.

Take in another deep breath and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Again, slowly breathe out and release the air.

Even slower now, take another breath. Fill your lungs and hold the air.

*(brief pause)*

Slowly release the breath and imagine the feeling of tension leaving your body.

Now, move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of your foot. Hold onto the tension and notice what it feels like.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension in your foot. Notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Next, begin to focus on your lower legs. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold them tightly and pay attention to the feeling of tension.

*(5 second pause)*

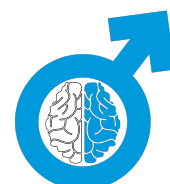
Release the tension from your lower legs. Again, notice the feeling of relaxation.

Remember to continue taking deep breaths.

Next, tense the muscles of your upper leg (tightly squeezing your thighs together) and pelvis (the feeling of holding in your urine flow when going to the toilet). Make sure you feel tense without going to the point of straining yourself.

*(5 second pause)*

And release. Feel the tension leave your muscles.



Begin to tense your stomach and chest. You can do this by sucking your stomach in. Squeeze harder and hold the tension. A little bit longer.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Allow your body to go limp. Let yourself notice the feeling of relaxation.

Continue taking deep breaths. Breathe in slowly, noticing the air filling your lungs, and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Release the air slowly. Feel it leaving your lungs.

Next, tense the muscles in your back by bringing your shoulders together behind you. Hold them tightly. Tense them as hard as you can without straining and keep holding.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your back. Feel the tension slowly leaving your body, and the new feeling of relaxation. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax.

Tense your arms all the way from your hands to your shoulders. Make a fist and squeeze all the way up your arm. Hold it.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your arms and shoulders. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your fingers, hands, arms, and shoulders. Notice how your arms feel limp and at ease.

Move up to your head. Tense your face by distorting the muscles around your eyes, nose and mouth - biting down on your teeth, tightening your lips together, and pushing your eyebrows down as if you were thinking hard.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Again, notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Finally, tense your entire body. Tense your feet, legs, stomach, chest, arms, and head. Tense harder, without straining. Hold the tension.

*(5 second pause)*

Now release. Allow your whole body to go limp. Pay attention to the feeling of relaxation, and how different you feel from when you first started the activity.

Perform this whenever you want to feel more relaxed, and over time you will be able to do this without even needing this script or other verbal direction.

