

How to Do Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation, or PMR, works by tensing and then relaxing the muscles in one part of your body at a time.

Here's how to do it.

First, find a quiet place where you can lie down.

Close your eyes, if you'd like to.

Take a few slow, deep breaths. In through your nose and out through your mouth.

Deep and slow.

In and out.

Now breathe in as you clench your hands into fists as tightly as you can.

Hold.

Hold, and release as you breathe out.

Feel the tension leaving your body.

Relax.

Now breathe in as you bend your arms at the wrists and elbows, bringing your fists toward your shoulders, flexing your forearms and biceps.

Flex as tightly as you can. Hold.

Hold, and release as you breathe out, bringing your arms back to the floor.

Feel the tension leaving your body.

Relax.

And now breathe in as you shrug and tighten your shoulders, bringing your shoulders up to your neck.

Hold.

Hold, and release as you breathe out.

Breathe in, and wrinkle your face into a tight frown, clenching your forehead, eyes, and mouth.

Hold.

Hold, and release as you breathe out.

Breathe in, and bend your head back, stretching your chin up and away from your chest.

Release as you breathe out.

Breathe in as you bring your chin tightly to your chest.

Hold.

Hold, and relax as you breathe out.

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Take a big deep breath to fill and stretch your chest.

Hold.

Hold, and release as you breathe out.

Breathe in, and arch your back up and away from the floor, tightening the muscles in your back.

Hold.

Hold, and relax as you breathe out and bring your back down to the floor.

Breathe in, and suck your stomach into a knot, tightening all the muscles there.

Hold.

Hold, and release as you breathe out and relax your stomach.

Now breathe in, and clench your buttocks together as tightly as you can.

Hold.

Hold, and relax as you breathe out.

Breathe in, and flex your toes to point toward your face, tightening all the muscles of your legs.

Hold.

Hold, and release as you breathe out.

Breathe in, and flex your toes away from your body.

Curl them downward while you tighten all the muscles of your legs.

Hold.

Hold, and relax as you breathe out.

Feel how all the tension has been released from your body.

Relax.

Breathe deep.

Stay here for as long as you like.

When you're ready, open your eyes if you had closed them.

Take a nice, long stretch as if you're just waking up, and then relax.

Notice how you feel in your mind and throughout your body.

Let any feelings of calm and relaxation become a part of who you are.