

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This activity is meant to help increase relaxation and reduce tension- by first creating a lot of tension! It is a skill that takes time to develop. With practice, you'll start to feel greater benefits from this activity.



Every time you practice, you should:

- Get your body in a comfortable position. Loosen any tight clothing. Lie or sit down, with all body parts uncrossed and no body parts supporting any others.
- For each area of the body listed below, gather tension by tightening muscles. Focus on the sensations of tightness in and around that specific area. **Hold the tension and inhale for 5-6 seconds, then release and exhale.**
- Relax for 10-15 seconds then move on to the next muscle group.

The progressive tightening can be done from feet to forehead (as shown below) or from forehead to feet.

1. Feet and ankles: curl your toes downwards.
2. Lower leg: tighten your calf muscle by pointing your toes down (lifting your legs can help).
3. Upper legs: squeeze your thigh muscles.
4. Buttocks: squeeze your buttocks together.
5. Stomach: pull your stomach in tightly.
6. Back: arch your back, pull your shoulder blades in tightly.
7. Chest: take a deep breath in and hold it.
8. Hands: clench your hands into fists.
9. Arms: bend both arms up to touch your shoulders while clenching your fists.
10. Neck and shoulders: raise your shoulders up to touch your ears.
11. Mouth: press teeth and lips together, push your tongue against roof of your mouth.
12. Nose and cheeks: scrunch your nose, bringing your cheeks up your eyes.
13. Eyes: shut your eyes tightly.
14. Forehead: pull eyebrows close together.

This activity is meant to build on itself. So, first start with tensing and relaxing each of the muscle groups individually. Once you feel comfortable doing each of them on their own, practice tensing and relaxing larger muscles groups. The larger muscle groups are:

- Lower limbs (feet and legs)
- Stomach and chest
- Arms, shoulders, and neck
- Face

When you are comfortable with the large muscle groups, you can practice tensing your whole body at once. When you tense your whole body at once, you should be completely stiff, nothing moving. When you relax your entire body, you should be completely limp and relaxed.