

## Progressive Relaxation/Deep Muscle Relaxation Exercises

This deep muscle relaxation exercise, "**Progressive Relaxation**" was developed by renowned physician Edmund Jacobson.

**To begin, assume a sitting position.** *It is easier to learn how to use your relaxation skills throughout the day if you practice while seated, rather than lying down.* Sit with your back fairly straight, in a chair that is comfortable for you. Place your feet flat on the floor to help support you as you become more relaxed. Let your hands rest comfortably in your lap. Close your eyes so you can more easily focus on your internal sensations. Let yourself relax as deeply as you can right now.

**First, I'll ask you to tense some specific muscles while letting your other muscles remain relaxed.** Focus your attention on the feelings of tension that come from those tensed muscles. Then, I'll ask you to release the tensed muscles all at once and notice how those muscles feel as you allow them to relax more and more. Note the sensations that come from those muscles as they relax progressively deeper and deeper. You will learn to be more aware of the difference between tension and relaxation and to let yourself relax more deeply anytime you choose.

**To begin, gently shift your attention to your hands, lying in your lap.** Let them remain there. And, now, clench your fists. Let all your other muscles remain relaxed. Focus just on the feelings of tension in your forearms and hands. Notice the location of the muscles that are tensed. And, now, relax all at once. Don't ease off, *just let go.* Study the sensations in your hands and forearms as the muscles relax further and further.

Once again, **raise your eyebrows** and feel the muscles that are tense. Now try to let go approximately half of the tension from your forehead, while keeping the remaining tension at a constant, steady level.

Now, let half of that tension go and hold the remaining tension steady; and release half of that tension. Try to maintain just a tiny level of tension. This is an excellent exercise to help you become aware of when you just beginning to tense your forehead even a little bit. And relax now.

Let all the tension go and just enjoy the good feeling as your forehead relaxes and smoothes out gradually, lets go and relaxes deeper and deeper.

Remember what your forehead feels like now when it is relaxed so you can be aware of even the smallest amount of tension during the day. This can be a key to relaxing the rest of your body.

**Close your eyes tightly,** now. You can feel the muscles tense that circle your eyes. Relax...Let all the tensions leave. Allow your eyelids to rest gently while your eyes remain closed.

While your eyes remain closed, slowly roll your eyes to the right in a large circle. It's easy to strain these muscles, so roll your eyes wide enough to feel the muscles but don't strain. Feel the tension in those muscles that move your eyes to the right. and as the tension passes to those muscles that move your

eyes downward; to the left; and up and around. Now, go back around to your left.

Just think of looking at nothing and be aware of the sensations as you let the tensions leave these muscles.

**Now, pucker your lips.** Feel the circular muscles around your mouth work. Relax.

**Clench your teeth.** Let your lips remain relaxed while clenching your teeth. Feel the muscles tighten in the corners of your jaw and on up into your temples. If you can't feel the tension in your temples, just reach your fingers up and touch your temples to feel that tension. Relax now. Just let your jaw hang slack, and let all the tension go out of it.

**Now imagine yourself humming** a very low restful note that vibrates throughout your whole body.

Now tense the muscles in your neck that move your head back. While keeping those muscles tight, try to move your head forward so that you're tensing one set of muscles against another. In addition, try to move your head to the right and to the left. Hold it. Now, let the muscles in your neck relax all at once. Let your neck relax so deeply that if a breeze came along it would be able to blow your head from side to side.

**Move the points of your shoulders forward and together** as if you were trying to touch your shoulders together in front of you. Now relax and pull your shoulders back as if you were trying to touch the points of your shoulder blades together behind you. And relax, now. Just feel the relaxation spread down your shoulders and upper back.

**Tighten the muscles that move your knees together.** At the same time, tighten the muscles that move your knees apart. At the same time, tense the muscles that push down and the ones that raise your thighs. And, finally, think of crossing your right leg over your left and your left leg over your right. Study all the feelings of tension. Relax, now just let those muscles lengthen and smooth out. Feel the muscles gradually lengthen as they relax more and more. Now, point your toes downward so that they are in direct line with your legs. Feel the muscles that are tensed in your calves. And relax, now. Pull your toes up as if to touch your shins. Feel the muscles work up your shins. Relax now, just let go.

In this next exercise, be careful not to tense too hard because you can cramp these muscles. **Make a fist with your toes by curling your toes under.** Feel the muscles tighten up under your arch. And relax now.

When your body gets deeply relaxed, it is important to become active again, slowly. Become aware of your feet against the floor; your body against the chair. Take 5 deep breaths and feel yourself becoming more and more alert with each breath, more rested and refreshed.

Wiggle your fingers and your toes. And, at your own rate, whenever you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

**Learning a skill takes practice, be that skill playing tennis, dancing, or writing. Learning to relax when we choose to at any time also is a skill, so we need to practice it.**

Choose a time each day (when your stomach is empty) when you will practice this relaxation technique. Don't worry about doing it precisely as it has been presented. **Doing it is more important.** So practice what parts you felt helped you the most. And enjoy learning to relax!

Note: Often times, people find that a [CD with relaxing sounds and additional relaxation techniques](#) helps them to even further de-stress and unwind.

***In order to enhance your relaxation and help you become more deeply relaxed, you can practice this breathing exercise:***

Breathe in slowly and evenly until your lungs are three-quarters full. Then exhale by letting just the weight of your chest expel the air. Breathe in slowly and effortlessly to 3/4 full; and let the weight of your chest expel the air from your lungs.

As you exhale, just let everything go and allow the weight of your chest to expel the air from your lungs. This is a good breathing exercise you can use to start your relaxation during the day.

Learn to use your exhalation as a signal for every other muscles in your body to relax a little more.

Continue this form of breathing, just being aware of the air coming in and out of your lungs. If any muscle has some remaining tension that sticks out above the others, find the switch to that tensed muscle and turn it off.

Don't try to relax by moving, because moving you will re-tense muscles and it takes those muscles longer to relax. Also, remember that the more often you allow yourself to relax the sooner you will be able to learn to relax even these chronically tense areas.

While continuing your breathing, calmly count backwards from 10 to 1, and allow yourself to become more relaxed with each count. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. Just allow all your muscles from head to toe to smooth out as you drift down into deeper and deeper relaxation.