

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

[Music]

Welcome to the University of Nottingham podcast.

In this podcast Mel Wraight, from the Counselling Service, shows you how to get the most out of progressive muscle relaxation.

Welcome to the progressive muscular relaxation podcast. This exercise is all about relaxing your body. When we get stressed or anxious our brain sends messages to the body to prepare for action, to fight or run away usually. This can result in the muscles of the body becoming tense, this is normal but if we're anxious or stressed for a prolonged period it can lead to discomfort, muscle pains or even headaches. Learning to relax the muscles helps to alleviate this tension and calms our minds as well.

First find a comfortable sitting position, minimise distractions, so turn off your phone, the music, the TV, close the door, make time and space to relax. To relax muscle groups we're going to put them in a state of exaggerated tension first. We'll be starting with the feet, and working up the body tensing and relaxing groups of muscles in turn. I'll explain how to tense each group of muscles, then take a deep breath while you hold the muscle tense. I'll count to five and then I'll tell you to release the muscle and relax.

Ready to start? Here we go then. Begin by tensing your feet. With your feet on the floor curl your toes downwards. Take a deep breath in and hold it, counting to five: one, two, three, four, five, and release both breath and tension.

Now your lower legs. With your toes on the floor raise your heels and press your toes into the floor, deep breath in and hold the position. Count to five: one, two, three, four, five, then release and relax.

Upper legs. Lift both feet slightly off the ground by tensing your thigh muscles. Deep breath in: one, two, three, four, five, and relax.

Hips and buttocks. Squeeze your buttocks together, deep breath in: one, two, three, four, five, and relax.

Your chest and stomach. Breath in deeply filling your lungs up and hold: one, two, three, four, five, and release.

And now your back, push your shoulder blades back, as if you were trying to touch them together, nice deep breath in: one, two, three, four, five, and relax.

Now your shoulders. Lift your shoulders up to your ears, like a tortoise going into its shell, deep breath in and hold it: one, two, three, four, five and relax.

Your neck, do this one carefully and gently. Look ahead and slowly and carefully roll your head back to look at the ceiling. Take a deep breath in: one, two, three, four, five, and roll your head forward gently and relax.

Now your jaw. Open your mouth wide as if you were yawning, take a deep breath in: one, two, three, four, five, and relax.

Your face and eyes. Squeeze your eyes tightly shut, scrunching up your lips to try to meet your nose. Deep breath in: one, two, three, four, five, and relax.

Forehead and scalp. Raise your eyebrows as if you're surprised, breathe in: one, two, three, four, five, and relax.

Your hands and forearms. Make fists with your hands and squeeze tight, take a deep breath in: one, two, three, four, five, and relax.

And lastly your upper arm. Make a fist again, less tightly, and raise your forearm to your shoulder to tense your bicep. Hold it there and take a nice deep breath in: one, two, three, four, five, and relax and let your arms hang at your sides.

Take a moment to enjoy the feeling of full body relaxation, and to recover before you resume your day. Like any exercise this one will get easier, and become more beneficial if you practice it regularly.