

Tense and Relax Method

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Tensing and releasing muscles can help with easing stress, relieving chronic pain, and can provide a healthy distraction tool when challenging emotions arise.

It can be hard to make our bodies relax without first feeling tense.

Making a body part tense first allows for the body to feel the opposite response, relaxation.

1. Find a quiet place to sit or lie down. Be sure you are as comfortable as possible.

2. Slowly and gently tense the muscles in your right foot.

Hold the tension for a few seconds and as you breathe out, relax the right foot completely. It may be helpful to say or think the word "relax" as you relax the foot. Let go of any tension. Take a brief pause, then, **repeat the process with the left foot.**

3. Next, tense the muscles in your right lower leg (calf) muscles.

Hold the lower leg tightly or tensely for a few seconds then, as you breathe out, relax the muscles completely. Pause. **Then, do the same with the left lower leg.**

4. Do the same tensing and relaxing of all the following muscle groups.

Be sure to let go of the tensing as you exhale and let the muscles relax as much as possible. Say or think the word "relax" as you let go of the tension. Be sure to pause between each body part:

- Your right thigh (upper leg) then left thigh
- Your inner legs by squeezing your legs together
- Your buttock muscles by squeezing your bottom
- Your abdomen (belly) muscles by contracting and sucking in your belly
- Your right shoulder by pulling your shoulder up towards your ear, then left shoulder
- Your jaw by clenching your teeth together gently
- Your lips by squeezing your lips together
- Your eyes by squeezing your eyes tightly
- Your forehead by squeezing your eyebrows together

5. Take some time to focus on your breath again when you finish your practice.

Use this link to view a video of this technique:

<https://youtu.be/1nZEdqcGVzo>