



# PMR

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE  
RELAXATION

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## What is PMR?

progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is an effective technique for reducing overall body tension as well as psychological stress.

This simple technique involves the tensing and relaxing of all of the major muscles in your body in order from your head to your feet.

By tensing your muscles before relaxing them, you enable yourself to relax them more thoroughly after you release, letting go of physical tension more effectively.

Fortunately, it can be easily learned and practiced virtually anywhere.

Research shows that relaxing your body physically can also release psychological tension and stress, minimising your stress reactivity and decreasing your experience of chronic stress. There are other effective ways to minimise psychological and emotional stress, but PMR can offer you one more tool to manage stress, which can help you to build your resilience overall.

With regular practice, the relaxation triggered by the PMR technique can come more quickly and automatically, making it a great go-to technique for many situations that involve physical tension.

As you practice tensing and relaxing all of your body's muscle groups, you can move to a shortened version of this activity, known as Deep Muscle Relaxation. This is where you rapidly relax your whole body.

When practicing DMR, imagine relaxation streaming from your head to your feet like water being poured, and gently engulfing you. As you reduce the tension you carry in your body, your whole being will feel less stress and you will enjoy increased physical and emotional health

## How to Do PMR

Here's how to get started:

1. **Find Some Time.** Block off at least 15 minutes to begin. I recommend setting an alarm for yourself, in case you fall asleep. (This will allow you to relax more completely, knowing you won't lose track of time.) I also recommend finding a private place so you'll feel more comfortable with step #3.
2. **Sit and Make Yourself Comfortable.** After finding a quiet place and several free minutes to practice PMR, sit or lie down and make yourself comfortable. It's more effective to stretch out and lie down, but if you don't have room to lie down, sitting in a comfortable chair is fine as well. Unfold your arms, however, and uncross your legs so that you have easy circulation and your body is able to really relax.
3. **Start With Your Face.** Begin by tensing all the muscles in your face and scalp. Make a tight grimace, close your eyes as tightly as possible, clench your teeth, even move your ears up if you can. Hold this for the count of eight as you inhale.
4. **Let Go of Your Tension.** Now exhale and relax completely. Let your face go completely lax, as though you were sleeping. Feel the tension seep from your facial muscles, and enjoy the feeling. Take your time and relax completely before you move onto the next step. You can repeat this step until your face feels thoroughly relaxed if desired.
5. **Move to Your Neck.** Next, completely tense your neck and shoulders, again inhaling and counting to eight. Then exhale and relax. Again, this step can be repeated until you feel absolutely relaxed in this area, particularly because many people carry tension in their neck and shoulder muscles. Take your time, and let yourself go.

**6. Work Your Way Down.** Continue down your body, repeating the procedure with the following muscle groups:

- chest
- abdomen
- entire right arm
- right forearm and hand (making a fist)
- right hand
- entire left arm
- left forearm and hand (again, making a fist)
- left hand
- buttocks
- entire right leg
- lower right leg and foot
- right foot
- entire left leg
- lower left leg and foot
- left foot
- face
- neck, shoulders, and arms
- abdomen and chest
- buttocks, legs, and feet
- 

**7. Practice.** Then Abbreviate. For the shortened version, which includes just four main muscle groups, quickly focus on each group one after the other. With practice, you can relax your body like ‘liquid relaxation’ poured on your head and it flowed down and completely covered you.

This takes practice, of course, but it may take less time to develop this skill than you may imagine. Once you're able to relax your body from head to toe, your mind will feel more relaxed as well, and your overall stress levels will decrease as well.

This exercise can help you to minimise chronic stress and build resilience to the stress you face in the future. You can use progressive muscle relaxation to quickly de-stress any time, making it a wonderfully effective tool.