

Myofascial Release Therapy (MFR) Self Care Guide

Use your breath to facilitate tension release

The more you become engaged in the process, the more you'll benefit from the time you spend on your MFR self care practices. One of the best ways to be engaged and present is through your breath. Therefore, breathing into the sore, tight, and tender area, bringing your focus and awareness to that place on your body via your breath, and letting your body soften over the therapy ball, or foam roll, will help your tissue release and let go.

It takes time

Remember this, it takes 2-5 minutes for your tissue to even **start** to soften. To get a great Myofascial Release of the tissue, it can take up to 10 minutes or longer of gentle, sustained pressure in one spot for the layers of tightness to fully let go. My suggestion is to place yourself on your ball or foam roll, set your stop watch for 10 minutes, and relax into it. Take this time for yourself and you'll benefit greatly, you deserve it.

Keep the intensity low

How's the intensity? Do you feel like you can breathe into, and exhale safely, from the area where you're therapy ball is? Do you feel like you have to hold off of relaxing into the pressure completely? It's very important to go easy and be gentle. Even when you tell yourself it's ok to force relaxation, if the pressure is too much your body will tighten into protection mode because deep down it feels like a threat to your safety. If you find a tense spot that feels nasty, start shallow, work around or beside it for a while before going deeper, or working on it directly.

Self treat on a soft surface

When doing self care lying down, always start on your bed. This will allow the pressure to be gentle so your body can soften and let go. After a couple days or weeks of regular self care, you won't be able to find many sore spots using your bed. Once you've got to this point, you can move to a firmer surface such as a padded or carpeted floor.

Self treat a few spots well

Since it takes time for our tissue to let go of tension, it's really important to work on a few spots thoroughly (multiple 10 minute sessions), rather than lots of spots in the same amount of time. It may feel good, but it is not ample time to get that long-lasting, myofascial tissue release. Short bursts of stretching only allow for a rubber band-like stretch that snaps back as soon as you stop stretching. Effective MFR self care is like stretching out taffy. When done properly, it will lengthen, stretch, and stay there when you let go.

Protocol

There's no protocol for self care. Sometimes you want to do it a few times throughout the day. Sometimes just once a day. Explore what works best for you and settle in to a regular, or irregular habit. If you put more time into self care, you'll require fewer sessions with your therapist to reach your goals. Ultimately, the choice is yours.

Zero distractions

Find an environment for self care where you can stay focused, and be free of distractions. Give yourself the best possible opportunity to tune into the feelings and sensations in your body. When you really listen to your body your subconscious will feel it. Deep down your body will say, “Okay, you’re listening, I can soften and release tension now.”

Feeling connection to other parts of your body

As you treating an area, you may feel a pull or stretch into another part of your body that is a distance away from your ball or foam roll. This referred sensation is indicating the other areas of tightness within your body. Sometimes, by staying with the initial spot and breathing into the referred, distant area of stretch and pull, it will release. Other times, we need to move the self care ball to the referred, distant area and address it directly.

Intense sensations

As you start to treat an area and feel it soften, it can become more intense as you breathe into it. Sometimes we have multiple layers of tightness. As the superficial layers let go, the pressure from the ball can reach into the deeper layers that are more tender. Following these sensations is therapeutic and sometimes it will be a bit more intense before it gets better. It can be helpful to liken this process to that of peeling an onion with multiple layers. In your body, the feeling of each layer will have it’s own characteristics and body response. If the sensation intensifies, you can ease up pressure by moving the ball to the edge of the tender area and start in again slower, remove air from the ball, add a buffer (folded towel or thin pillow), move to your soft bed, or stop completely.

Persistent sensations

Some spots just seem to never let go, no matter how long you wait, how slow and gentle your pressure is, or how much you breathe into. If you are following all of the principles listed above, this can indicate that there is another area of tightness linked to that spot which needs to be addressed first, before that stubborn spot can let go. This is an example of the onion concept. That stubborn spot is probably a lower layer that you just don’t have access to yet. You’ll get to it somewhere down the road.

Let go of expectations and desired outcomes

This is a practice, there is a learning curve. Give yourself time to improve, and be patient with your results. Having an agenda, or an expectation, may distract you from the healing that is happening that you never even intended. Begin to view your body as a whole, non-compartmentalized system. If you want your compartmentalized pain to go away, you need your whole body balanced and functioning properly.

If you are experiencing sensations that intensify without resolve, or sensations that remain constant without shifting or changing as you continue with your self care, please let your therapist know.

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