

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION FOR HER

Tense Muscle Relief

The body's reaction to fear and anxiety are tense muscles. Tense muscles can increase body aches and pains. It Can also lead to feeling mentally and physically burned out. Black women's history of being oppressed, unrealistic societal expectations, perfectionism, and worry can lead to feeling unaccepted, a sense of other, and tense. Women who ascribe to being Caucasian can often experience vigilance, tension, and worry with not wanting to offend those who experience systemic rejection though also not knowing how to be an ally. As a result, general brain functioning can include an increase in stress hormones while PMR promotes relaxation based neural chemicals. The goal is to rewire from tension and discomfort toward increased awareness and connection with your body.

Muscle Tension

Muscle tension is commonly associated with stress, anxiety and fear as part of a process that helps our bodies prepare for potentially dangerous situations. Even though some of those situations may not actually be dangerous, our bodies respond in the same way. Sometimes we don't even notice how our muscles become tense, but perhaps you clench your teeth slightly so your jaw feels tight, or maybe your shoulders become.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation a.k.a.

PMR

A recommended technique for muscle tension is PMR. Steps to using PMR:

1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the floor and hands rested where comfortable.
2. Take into account physical injuries and be mindful of those areas.
3. Mentally give yourself grace and permission to relax and melt into your body.
4. Breathe in and tense the muscle group of focus and then relax the muscles as you breath out slowly.
 - a. When you breath in find a number you feel comfortable with and count that number in, hold, and out.
 - i. E.g. triangle breathing: choosing the number 4
 - ii. Count in to 4, hold to 4, breath out to 4
 - b. Ensure you breath normally when needed to avoid light headedness.

Body Area Relaxation Sequences

- **Hand & Forearm** – Tighten your fist as if squeezing a lemon and gently let go and relax your hand.
- **Upper Arm** – Bring your forearm up to your shoulder as if making a muscle like flexing your pec.
- **Forehead** – Raise your eyebrows very high as if surprised and then relax them.
- **Eyes & Cheeks** – squeeze your eyes tight shut and then relax all areas of your face.
- **Mouth & Jaw** – Open your mouth as wide as it can go as if yawning and then relax your mouth.
- **Front of Neck** – Tense the muscles in your neck by frowning and as you relax your neck gently lift your chin toward the sky.
- **Back of Neck** – Face forward and pull your head back slowly until you are looking toward the ceiling and then gently bring your head back to center and then pull your head forward to look at the floor. Finally, head back to center upright position. Breath in for all parts of the sequence
- **Shoulders** – bring your shoulders up to your ears (like a turtle hiding its head in the shell) and then release them.
- **Shoulder blades/Back** – Push your shoulders back as though to touch them, while pushing your chest forward then release.
- **Chest** – Breathe in deeply filling up your lungs and then release
- **Stomach** – Breathe in deeply while letting your stomach expand and then breathe out.
- **Hips & Buttocks** – Squeeze your buttocks and then release.
- **Upper Leg** – Tighten your thigh(s) and then loosen.
- **Lower Leg** – Pull your toe(s) toward you to stretch the calf muscle(s) and slowly release. Be careful to avoid cramping.
- **Foot/Feet** – Curl your toes downward and release. Be careful to avoid cramping.