



## Anxiety Workshop Meditation

*offered by the  
MU Student Health Center*

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation meditation

Now we will do a brief Progressive Muscle Relaxation technique. I will lead you as you alternate clenching tightening and releasing relaxing a few of your muscle groups. Imagine the tension in your body going away when you release.

This exercise can be helpful as it will teach you to notice the difference between your body being tense and being relaxed so that you may notice your muscle tension more easily and it is effective because our bodies cannot be both tense and relaxed at the same time.

1. Start by taking a few deep belly breaths. Breathe in...hold...breathe out (x2)...continue breathing in and out slowly and evenly as we engage in the exercise. Start by tensing the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as far as you can. Hold (7-10 seconds) feel the tension, the discomfort, now release (10-15 seconds). Imagine your forehead muscles becoming smooth and limp as you relax. Continue to breathe in..hold...out.
2. Next move your attention to the muscles around your eyes, bring tension to them, by clenching your eyelids tightly shut. Hold... (again 7-10 secs, throughout) release. (10-15 secs). Imagine sensations of deep relaxation spreading all around your eyes.
3. Continue breathing in...hold...and out...Now tighten your jaw by clenching your jaw together so that your teeth are pressed tightly together. Feel the pressure between your teeth, within your jaw. Hold...now release. Let your lips part and allow your jaw to hang loose. Take a moment to notice the sensation of relaxation within your face. Continue to breathe deeply and slowly.
4. Next, tighten your neck muscles by pulling your head way back, as if you would touch your head to your back...be gentle...focus only on tensing the muscles in your neck. Hold...now release. Feel your neck muscles loosen.
5. Now bring your attention to your shoulders, start to tighten your shoulders by raising them up as if you were going to touch your ears. Tense, feel the pressure...now release, feel the tension lower, feel your shoulders begin to droop naturally. Remember to keep breathing, in....hold...and out...
6. Tighten the muscles around your shoulder blades by pushing your shoulder blades back as if you were going to touch them together. Hold the tension in your shoulder blades...feels the discomfort, the tension...now release. Breathe in... hold...breathe out.
7. Next, Tighten your biceps by curling your forearms up toward your shoulders and "making a muscle" with both arms. Tense them, hold... and release, allowing your arms to drop to your sides and go limp.
8. Next tighten your forearms by curling the palm of your hand in toward your arm. Squeeze tightly feeling how quickly the tension builds. Hold...and release...allowing your hands to relax and once again rest naturally on your lap. Continue to breathe, in...hold...and out...
9. Bring your attention to your hands, tighten your fists so that your fingertips and fingernails press tightly into your palms. Squeeze...notice the tension...and release...feel the relief.
10. Moving away from your arms, focus your attention on your stomach muscles. Tighten and increase the tension around your stomach, notice how quickly it becomes difficult to maintain your deep belly breathing, notice how you are unable to take in your deep full breaths...and release...

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11. Tighten your buttocks by pulling them together. Hold...now release. Imagine the muscles in your hips going loose and limp.
12. Next begin tightening your thighs so that your legs are pressed tightly together, squeeze, feel the tension, the discomfort... and release... Continue to breathe deeply and slowly.
13. Tighten your calf muscles by pushing your toes and feet down into the floor. Feel the discomfort, the pressure, feel how tense you are...now release.
14. Next, tighten your feet by curling your toes downward. Curl them tightly...now release them, feel your feet sink softly in a relaxed state into the floor.
15. Now take a few moments to scan your body for areas which may still contain tension, move your focus to that area, engage with the tension...and release. (Approx. 2 min). Once you feel you have engaged and released all the muscles that you need to, imagine a wave of warmth and relaxation starting from the top of your head and moving slowly, gradually penetrating every muscle of your body all the way down to your toes. Take a few moments to sit with this deep state of relaxation. (approx. 1 min)
16. This concludes the Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercise. Take your time returning your alert and attentive self. As you do so, notice the difference in your bodily sensations. When you are ready you may open your eyes and bring your attention back into the room.