

## How to: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

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### Tips before trying the technique:

- Find a quiet and comfortable environment.
- Give yourself around 15 minutes to do this exercise.
- Take your time with each step. Don't rush.
- Let your muscles tense and then fully relax before moving to the next muscle group.
  
- When first learning this technique, you can practice even when you are not feeling anxious, 1-2 times a day. As you practice more, the relaxation response will come more quickly.

### Here are the steps for progressive muscle relaxation (read through the instructions before trying the technique):

1. Find a comfortable position in a chair or lie on your back. Try to wear loose, comfortable clothing.
2. Close your eyes and take three to four slow and deep breaths. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. We will start to tense and relax one muscle group at a time (*Note: in this post I chose to go from the feet up but feel free to go in a different order. Just be systematic and move from one muscle group to the next*).
3. **Starting at the feet.** Squeeze the muscles in your feet and toes tight for 10 seconds. Then, slowly relax everything as you count for 15 seconds. Notice how relaxed your muscles feel. Imagine your stress and anxiety melting away as you let go of all the tension in your muscles. Continue taking slow and deep breaths.
4. **The calves.** Squeeze your calves tight for 10 seconds. Slowly relax your calves as you count for 15 seconds. Feel all the tension and stress melt away.
5. **The thighs.** Squeeze your thighs tight for 10 seconds. Slowly relax your thighs as you count for 15 seconds. Notice how relaxed your body feels.
6. **Continue your way up.** Keep moving up your body with the following muscle groups:
  - The buttocks
  - The stomach
  - The arms and hands
  - The chest
  - The neck and shoulders
  - The jaw
  - The face/forehead

When you become more familiar with the technique and want to practice a quicker version, try tensing the major muscle groups together:

- 1) Buttocks, legs and feet
- 2) Abdomen and chest
- 3) Neck, shoulders and arms
- 4) Face and jaw