

## Progressive Relaxation

Our daily lives are full of stressors. In order to have a feeling of well-being our muscles must be relaxed. Progressive relaxation reduces pulse rate and blood pressure. Deep muscle relaxation, when successfully mastered, can be used as an anti-anxiety pill.

Progressive relaxation techniques were developed by a Chicago physician, Edmund Jacobson. His techniques were published in 1929 in the book Progressive Relaxation. Dr. Jacobson's premise was based on the fact that the body responds to anxiety-provoking thoughts with muscular tension. The tension becomes anxiety. Further, deep muscle relaxation reduces the anxiety due to incompatibility.

### FOUR MUSCULAR GROUPS:

1. Hands, arms and biceps
2. Face, throat, tongue, neck, and shoulders
3. Chest stomach and lower back
4. Thighs, buttocks, calves, and feet

### BASIC PROCEDURE:

Be comfortable and concentrate on the following expressions

1. Let go of tension
2. Let the tension dissolve away
3. Throw away tension and say I am feeling calm and rested.

Give your entire body a chance to relax. Breathe in and fill your lungs completely. Hold your breath. Notice the tension. Now exhale and let your chest become loose, letting the air hiss out. Continue relaxing, breathing in and out allowing the tension to be released. Note the tension and your allowing it to leave your chest.

Now place your hand on your stomach. Breathe deeply, pushing gently in and upward. Hold and relax. Repeat until you are deeper and deeper into relaxation. Arch your back without straining, keeping the rest of your body as relaxed as possible.

Tighten your buttocks and thighs, flexing your thighs by pressing down your heels as hard as you can. Now relax and feel the relieve from tension. Curl your toes downward then release and bend your toes upward toward your face. Relax again.

Now that relaxation has deepened and you feel the heaviness of your lower body, relax. Relax your feet, ankles, calves, shins, knees, thighs, and buttocks. Spread your relaxation in to your lower back, chest and shoulders. Let go, let go of the tension. Deeper and deeper. Feel the looseness and relaxation in your neck, jaw and facial muscles. As you relax to the fullest degree, press your lips, eyes, jaw, and tongue until they too are relaxed. Breathe, breathe, breathe deeper and deeper.

#### SUGGESTION FOR RELAXATION EXERCISES:

1. Make an audiotape to facilitate your relaxation program.
2. Have soft relaxing music for background sounds.
3. Either you or a friend can record the above exercises and repeat them throughout the taping session.
4. The person taping should use a deep, soft, slow voice as the recording occurs.
5. Be sure to include the relaxation expressions 4-5 times throughout the recording.
6. Progressive Relaxation is best when practiced daily for twenty minutes each session.

#### Further Reading:

Jacobson, Edmund. 1974. Progressive Relaxation. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Midway Reprint.

Wolpe, Joseph. 1982. The Practice of Behavior Therapy. 3rd ed. New York: Pergamon Press.

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