

Session Four: Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

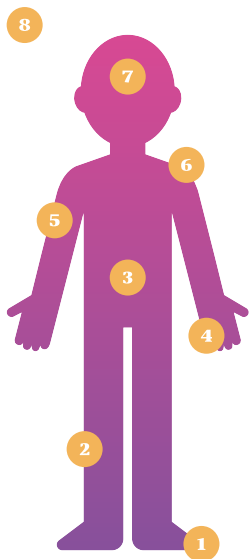
Progressive muscle relaxation is a tool you can practice often and when you're in various situations, like at school or work or lying in bed, trying to fall asleep. As you relax different muscles, it can help bring a sense of calm to your body, reduce body aches, and improve your sleep.

To prepare for this exercise, get comfortable in your seat and place your feet on the ground. If you're sitting on the ground, you can sit cross-legged or have your legs out in front of you. If there's space, you could also lie down and let your body relax. You might like to use the deep belly breathing exercise from session one to help you relax.

Next, you will focus on different parts of your body one at a time and follow these three steps:

1. **Tense** the body part as tight as you can for five seconds.
2. **Relax** and take three deep breaths.
3. **Notice** how that body part feels as you relax.

There are a few different ways to do this exercise. Some people like to start with their feet and move their way up the body, while others like the reverse—starting with the head and moving down to the toes. Below is one order you could follow as you tense, relax, and notice:



- 1 **Feet** (flex your feet like there's something hot you're trying to keep your feet away from)
- 2 **Legs** (take a deep breath in as you point your toes and tense your legs like you're trying to reach something with them)
- 3 **Stomach** (tense your stomach like someone's about to hit it)
- 4 **Hands** (make a fist with your hands and squeeze them as hard as you can)
- 5 **Arms** (flex your biceps and pretend you're a bodybuilder)
- 6 **Shoulders** (lift your shoulders as high as you can, like someone just put ice down your back)
- 7 **Face** (frown like you're really angry or scrunch up your nose like something smells really bad)
- 8 **Whole body** (tense as many muscles as you possibly can at the same time)



If you are looking for local mental health services or information in another location or language, we encourage you to search online or reach out to your local churches and health care providers.

Crisis Lines

If you are considering suicide or are concerned about someone who may be, crisis lines are free, anonymous, confidential, and available 24/7.

- **Australia:** 13 11 14 (Lifeline)
- **Canada:**
 - 988 (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline three-digit dialing code)
 - 1-833-456-4566 (Crisis Services Canada)
- **New Zealand:**
 - 1737 (National Mental Health and Addictions Helpline)
 - 0800-543-354 (Lifeline Aotearoa)
- **United Kingdom:** 116 123 (Samaritans)
- **United States:**
 - 1-800-273-8255 (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)
 - 988 (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline three-digit dialing code)

Emergency Resources

If a critical situation arises, attend your nearest hospital emergency department or call your local emergency number.

- **Australia:** 000
- **Canada:** 911
- **European Union:** 112
- **New Zealand:** 111
- **United Kingdom:** 999
- **United States:** 911

