



## PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Both relaxing breathing and the CALM exercise can lower stress. Sometimes, though, they don't produce a deep level of relaxation, or might not be enough for severe stress. For such times, progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) can be very helpful. It requires more time and a quiet space, but the results can be worth it!

First, find a room where you can be alone for about 30 minutes, and lay down on your back. Put on relaxing music if you like. Close your eyes and breathe slowly. If you like, you can do PMR in bed at bedtime.

Next, tense then relax different muscle groups, one at a time. First you will tense the muscle group for 4-5 seconds, then let go of the tension for about 30 seconds. After repeating this once, move to the next muscle group and do the same. Keep your body as still as possible, except for the muscles you are tensing and relaxing. The muscles used and the positions for tensing them are below:

When you release tension, note the difference between tension and relaxation. The skill of letting tension go is what you are aiming for during the day when you feel stressed.

### STEP 1: FOREHEAD

Raise your eyebrows.

### STEP 2: EYES

Squint.

### STEP 3: NECK

Tuck in and lower your chin toward your chest.

### STEP 4: CHEST

Take a very deep breath (with your upper chest) and hold it.

### STEP 5: SHOULDERS

Lift both shoulders up toward your ears.

### STEP 6: ARMS

Turn your palms up, and then make a fist. Bring your fists up to your shoulders while tensing the biceps.

### STEP 7: ABDOMEN

Tighten these muscles as if you were about to be elbowed in the stomach.

### STEP 8: LEGS

Lift both legs off the ground, straighten your knees and point your toes toward your head.

