



Activity: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This exercise helps us to connect with and relax the body. It is a 2-step process: First, we deliberately **tense** a group of muscles, noticing how that feels.

Next, we **release** the tension and notice how that feels. With practice we can recognise when we are starting to tense up during the day, and can 'cue' the relaxation.

This is adapted from the guided practice in [Building Emotional Intelligence](#), by Linda Lantieri

Preparation

- If we are **sitting**, our **back** is straight, with the body relaxed and at ease – stable like a mountain. **Feet** resting on the floor, **hands** resting lightly on the knees.

Or, if we are **lying down**, we are flat on our back, letting the arms and legs relax out to the sides, releasing all the muscles and giving the whole body to gravity. Letting ourselves sink more deeply into the floor with each out-breath...if the lower back is sore, then folding the legs at the knees.

Holding the **whole body in our awareness**, feeling the weight of the body pressing down on whatever is supporting us, the sensations of touch or pressure where the body makes contact with the chair or floor.

Now spending a few moments **tuning into our mood**, noticing how we feel... there's no right or wrong way to feel, however we are is completely fine...

- Bringing to mind your motivation for doing this meditation – for yourself...and for others...
- Settling in the present moment, simply aware of any sights, sounds and physical sensations... Taking **three long breaths** – deep breaths in, and long, slow breaths out... and then letting the breath settle into its natural rhythm...

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Now dropping awareness down into the body, placing attention on the body, and any sensations arising within it...



- Starting with the **right arm** – Breathing in – clenching the right hand and making the whole arm tense, squeezing from the tips of the fingers up to the arm pits. Holding for a count of 5, noticing how that feels. Breathing out – releasing, letting the whole arm go limp, noticing the changing sensations as you let go. And resting for one full in-breath and out-breath... Then repeating for the **left arm**...
- Now the **neck and shoulders**. Breathing in – tensing the shoulders up towards the ears... noticing the sensations. Holding for 5 seconds. Breathing out – releasing, noticing how it feels as the tension releases... And resting again for one full in – breath and outbreath...
- Turning your attention to the **head and face**. Breathing in – scrunching up all the facial muscles... holding for 5... noticing... and breathing out, letting go... Now resting for one whole breath, in and out...
- Whenever the mind wanders, simply acknowledging this and bringing attention back to sensations in the body, without judging or criticising – mind-wandering is completely normal...
- Next the **chest, stomach and upper back**. Breathing in, filling up the lungs completely, holding for 5... Noticing... And releasing, breathing out... noticing... At the end of the out-breath sucking in the stomach and holding for 5 again and releasing, noticing... and resting for a full breath...
- Now the **hips, buttocks and lower back**. Breathing in, squeezing the buttocks together and holding for 5... Noticing... And releasing, breathing out... noticing... and resting for a full breath again...
- Moving onto the **right leg and foot**. Breathing in, tightening up the thighs, lower legs and flexing the foot back, curling the toes... Noticing... Holding for 5. And relaxing, breathing out... noticing... and resting for a full breath... Then repeating for the **left leg and foot**... Breathing in, tightening up the thighs and calves, flexing the foot back, curling the toes... Feeling how tight and tense the leg muscles are... Holding for 5. And softening, releasing as we breathe out... feeling the difference between the tension and relaxation... and resting for a full breath...
- Now one last time, as you breathe in, tightening and tensing up your **whole body** all at once, holding for 5, noticing how that feels... and breathing out, releasing and letting go of any last bit of tension... and noticing how you feel now...
- Resting for a few moments, continuing to release and let go with each out-breath. Then slowly beginning to wiggle the fingers and toes, opening the eyes if they were closed, taking a big stretch, and sitting up if you were lying down...
- Allowing the mind to rest in its own natural awareness... And dedicating (if you don't have your own dedication, you can use ours, available at: <https://middlewayeducation.org/portfolio/dedication-prayer/>).