Simple Progressive Muscle Relaxation Guide

A gentle 10-minute way to let go of tension at the end of the day

What Is Progressive Muscle Relaxation?

Progressive muscle relaxation, often called PMR, is a relaxation technique that involves gently tensing and then releasing different muscle groups. The idea is to help you recognize the difference between muscle tension and relaxation. You don't need any special equipment, and a basic session takes about 10 minutes.

Set the Scene

- [ ] Choose a quiet spot where you can sit or lie down comfortably.
- [ ] Loosen tight clothing and set your phone to silent.
- [ ] Dim the lights or play soft music, rainfall, or other calming sounds if you like.
- [ ] Keep it gentle: tense each area to a mild, comfortable level, never to the point of strain.

How It Works

1. Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down.
2. Start with your hands. Gently make a fist and hold for about five seconds.
3. Release and notice how your hands feel as the muscles relax. Stay with that feeling for 10 to 15 seconds.
4. Move on to the next area on the checklist (page 2), repeating the same pattern: tense gently, release, notice.
5. Breathe slowly and comfortably throughout. A calm breath in as you tense, a slow breath out as you let go works well for many people.

A Few Reminders

Skip any area that is injured or uncomfortable, and stop if you feel pain. If you have a condition that affects your muscles or circulation, check with a healthcare professional before trying this technique. Not every session will feel the same, and that's perfectly normal.

Your Muscle Group Checklist

Work from top to bottom. Hold each gentle tension for about 5 seconds, then release for 10 to 15 seconds.

Area	Gentle tension	Done
Hands	Gently make a fist with both hands.	☐
Arms	Bend your elbows and softly draw your forearms toward your shoulders.	☐
Shoulders	Lift your shoulders gently toward your ears.	☐
Forehead	Raise your eyebrows as if mildly surprised.	☐
Eyes and cheeks	Close your eyes lightly and scrunch your face a little.	☐
Jaw	Press your lips together softly and let your teeth come lightly together. Release by letting your mouth fall slightly open.	☐
Stomach	Draw your belly in gently, as if making room.	☐
Legs	Gently press your thighs together or tighten your calves a little.	☐
Feet	Softly curl your toes. Skip this one if your feet tend to cramp.	☐

A Quick Check-In

Before I started, my body felt (circle one): **1 2 3 4 5** 1 = very relaxed, 5 = very tense

When I finished, my body felt (circle one): **1 2 3 4 5**

Notes

If stress or trouble sleeping is a regular struggle, consider talking with a doctor or other healthcare professional. This guide is intended as a simple way to unwind, not a substitute for professional care.