

# Strategy #12: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This strategy helps you to bring awareness to your body, reduce your stress, and trigger relaxation. Learn how to relax your body through a series of movements designed to bring tension to a set of muscles, followed by a quick release of tension. The more often you do progressive muscle relaxation, the quicker you will notice when you are holding tension.

## Part 1: Tensing the muscle group

Choose a muscle group to begin with. While maintaining a deep, slow breath, tense the muscles and really focus on the sensations of the tensed muscles. You may notice some trembling or discomfort; this is normal. Try to keep the other muscles relaxed while you tense your target area.

## Part 2: Relaxing the tense muscles

After holding the tense muscles for five seconds, quickly release the muscles while taking a slow, extended exhale. Feel the sensations that come into that body part as you let go.

**Example:** Bring tension to the hands by squeezing them into fists while you take a slow, deep inhale. Hold the tension for five seconds and then fully and quickly release the tension while exhaling. Sit for 15 seconds and observe the sensations of the relaxed area. Then move on to the next body part.

### Relax in the following order:

- |              |                    |                |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. forehead  | 6. chest           | 11. buttocks   |
| 2. eyes      | 7. arms            | 12. thighs     |
| 3. nose      | 8. hands           | 13. lower legs |
| 4. mouth     | 9. stomach         | 14. feet       |
| 5. shoulders | 10. middle of back |                |

Begin this practice as soon as you notice your stress warning signs.



#### AUDIO FILES

*Audio file #5: Progressive Muscle Relaxation – Short Version ([www.brushededucation.ca/stress](http://www.brushededucation.ca/stress))*

*Audio file #6: Progressive Muscle Relaxation – Extended Version ([www.brushededucation.ca/stress](http://www.brushededucation.ca/stress))*