

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that involves a conscious tensing and relaxing of your muscles. You work through different muscle groups in a sequence while focusing on the difference between feelings of tension and relaxation.

It is usually helpful to have guided instructions when you first learn this technique. There are free sites on the internet or many reasonably priced tapes available in stores. You might contact the library and check out books or tapes that provide specific instructions.

Progressive muscle relaxation takes advantage of the fact that when you voluntarily create exaggerated tension in a muscle and then quickly let it go, the muscle rapidly returns to a relaxed state. In fact, the muscle will be more relaxed than when you started.

Try it now with one of your hands. Make a fist and keep it tight for 5-10 seconds. You can feel the tension increase in your hand and arm the longer you hold it tight. Now, let it go all at once and relax. Feel the difference? In progressive muscle relaxation, you gradually work your way around your body tightening and then loosening up areas of chronic muscle tension.