

Progressive muscle relaxation

Before we begin, seat yourself comfortably in a chair with your head resting securely against a pillow or the back of your chair. While sitting is preferable, you may lie down on the floor or on a bed. Remove your shoes, loosen your tie and belt or any other restrictive clothing.

As we go through life day by day, we experience unwanted tension, pain, emotional upsets that force our bodies to constantly adjust. This stress and tension is accumulated and stored in our bodies {soft music} Stress causes us to breathe in a shallow way. As we begin to relax and let go, we begin by taking a deep breath {breathing sounds}, breathing deeply through the nose and exhaling completely through the mouth. As you breathe in deeply, feel your chest, diaphragm, and stomach expand more and more, taking in life-giving, healing oxygen. And as you exhale slowly, evenly, feel the tension drain away and feel your body begin to relax. As you continue to breathe in deeply, exhaling slowly, take a moment now and adjust yourself more comfortably in your chair, your feet on the floor or slightly raised.

Your arms hanging limply by your sides, your open hands resting in your lap {breathing sounds} Breathe in deeply now and exhale slowly and completely. Close your eyes and focus your awareness on your head and face, in particular your forehead and eyes. Gently squeeze your eyelids and release and feel all the tiny muscles around your eyes and forehead smooth out and relax. Allow this relaxation to flow on down your face to your cheeks and jaw. Move your mouth and jaw around gently in a circular motion {breathing sounds} Take a deep breath and as you exhale, allow all the tension that's held there to drain away, feeling very relaxed. Your mouth may part slightly as it releases all its tension. {Breathing sounds} Continue to breathe deeply and evenly and allow your awareness now to move down your neck and shoulders. Very carefully, gently, move your head slightly from side to side, up and down. Gently, carefully, lift each shoulder, the right and the left, becoming aware of all the tension stored between the shoulders {breathing sounds} Take a deep breath and exhale and allow all that tension to drain away, down your arms and out your fingertips. It simply melts away. Let go of all the burdens you may be carrying in your neck and shoulders. Drop them like heavy weights. Allow them to fall away. Take a deep breath, and as you exhale, feel your shoulders relax and sag while still comfortably supporting your head and neck.

Focus your attention now on your arms, hands, fingers {breathing sounds} Breathe in deeply and gently stretch your fingers like a lazy cat, curling them into a ball. {breathing sounds} Take a deep breath, exhale, and release any remaining tension you might find in your shoulders, upper back, arms, or hands, letting it drain away down your arms and out your fingertips. {breathing sounds} Your body is becoming more and more relaxed. Your arms hang heavy by your side. Your hands rest comfortably in your lap and you feel very safe, very secure, and very relaxed.

{breathing sounds} Allow your awareness now to move down your back, buttocks, and thighs. Gently squeeze your buttocks together, breathe in deeply and as you exhale, release all the tension stored in those muscles, all the tension in your lower back, buttocks, and thighs, drain away as you relax deeper and deeper. {breathing sounds} Focus your awareness now on your legs, calves, and feet. Move your toes around in your stockings. Curl them gently and stretch them out. Feel the gentle pressure against the fabric of your stocking. {breathing sounds} Breathe deeply, exhale, and release any remaining tension, tightness, restriction that you might find there –just letting go.

{breathing sounds} Your body is now totally relaxed, but your mind is awake and alert. You may sense a feeling of warmth spreading over your body, a slight tingling or a light floating sensation. This is all natural as your body relaxes and begins to heal itself {breathing sounds} Focus on your breathing again and notice how easy and effortless your breathing has become {breathing sounds} Your open lungs expand and you breathe deeply, taking in healing oxygen and expelling with each breath tension and harmful wastes. As you scan your body from head to feet, see all your inner organs relaxed, operating smoothly, in harmony with each other. Your heart beat is regular, even, steady, sending nourishing, soothing, healing blood to every organ in your body. Your stomach, kidneys, intestines, skin, bones, and your wonderful brain. Allowing each to do their job well. All of your body is very relaxed. Your mind remains awake and alert. {breathing sounds} You are listening to your body's needs. You have heard its message, and you'll be more in tune with what it is trying to say to you each and every time you sit comfortably, breathe deeply, and relax all the parts of your body. Take a moment once more and scan your body from head to feet {breathing sounds} If any tension spots remain, simply breathe deeply and release as you exhale. Feel how wonderful it is to be so relaxed, calm, peaceful. Enjoy this wonderful, peaceful, calm feeling that permeates your entire body.

{surf sounds} And now, become aware of your breathing again. Feel your body becoming energized, ready to meet any needs of the day. Know that at any time you want to repeat this exercise, reducing stress levels, all you need to do is sit comfortably, breathe deeply, focus on the parts of your body, and allow them to release all of their tension.

And now, move your muscles gently, shifting your weight, and as I count from 3 to 1 – 3 feel yourself returning into the moment. 2 wide awake, fully refreshed and energized. And now, if you are ready, 1. You may open your eyes, eager and refreshed, ready to meet the demands of the day.

{music and surf sounds}

