

Table 3. Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise for Patients

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique for reducing muscle tension by alternately tensing and relaxing the muscles. With practice, you can learn how to effectively relax and reduce muscle tension. The following exercise is simple and will only take a few minutes.

- Start by getting into a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Place your feet flat on the floor, with your legs uncrossed, and your hands resting comfortably at your side or on your lap.
- Begin by noticing your breathing, noticing your abdomen rise and fall with each breath (pause after each breath). As your breathing becomes more relaxed and restful, take your awareness up to your face. Then you'll start this process with the muscles in your face.
- Tense the muscles in the face by making a sour face, like you just ate a lemon, holding that face for 4 seconds and then releasing the muscles in your face. Repeat the process 2 times.
- Notice the tension just washing away. With each tense-and-release cycle, you'll notice it becomes easier to release and relax each muscle group. Do the same thing you just did before, except you should be inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, relaxing even more with each breath.
- Now, you should move your awareness to the shoulder and neck area. Notice the muscles in the shoulder and neck area. Tense the muscles in the neck by pressing the shoulders towards the ears and holding for a count of 4 seconds and then releasing. With your awareness in the neck and shoulders, again tense them and hold for 4 seconds, and release.
- Bring your awareness to the muscles in the arms. Tense the muscles in both of your arms by curling the arms up toward your biceps and holding them as if you are lifting weights and holding them to your chest, holding for 4 seconds and then releasing.
- Now, bring your awareness to the muscles in the hands. Tense the muscles in the hands by clenching them into tight fists, holding for a count of 4 seconds and then releasing. With your awareness in the hands, again tense the muscles in your hands and hold for 4 seconds and release.
- Notice the muscles in the upper back, around the shoulder blades. Tense the muscles in the upper back by pressing the shoulder blades together and holding for a count of 4 seconds and then releasing. With your awareness in the shoulder blades, again tense and hold for 4 seconds, and release.
- Now, notice the muscles in the abdomen and low back. Tense the muscles in the abdomen by imagining that we are trying to touch the belly button to the spine, pressing the low back to the chair and holding for a count of 4 seconds and then releasing. With your awareness in the abdomen, again tense and hold for 4 seconds, and release.
- Now on to the feet. Tense these muscles by pointing the toes toward the knees, and holding for 3 seconds, and then releasing the calf muscles. With your awareness in the calf muscles, again tense the calves and hold for 4 seconds, and release.