

Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR)

Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR) is the name of a technique which teaches you how to become more aware of the tension in your body and how to relax the different muscle groups.

During this technique you will tense particular muscles in your body and then release them to help you notice the difference when your muscles are relaxed. This will help you realise when your muscles are starting to tense during the day so that you can manage your tension before it starts to increase.

- Relaxation breathing is a skill you will need to learn - practise at least once a day for relaxation to have a longer term effect.
- Begin by practising this exercise at times when you are feeling more relaxed (and can concentrate better) and then when you feel more confident start to use it at times when you feel more anxious.
- Don't try to relax too hard. Let it happen naturally.

- Find somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed. Lie or sit somewhere comfortable. This could be on your bed, in a reclining chair or on the floor.
- Wear loose comfortable clothes. Take off your shoes if possible.
- Close your eyes.
- **Start by focusing on your breathing. Breathe through your nose rather than your mouth. Breathe smoothly and steadily. Breathe in and say the word 'calm' quietly to yourself. Breathe out and say the word 'calm'. Repeat for a few minutes.**
- If distracting thoughts jump into your mind. Try not to follow them – concentrate on your breathing.
- Become aware of the tension in your body.
- Work through the following muscle groups. Each time tensing the muscles for a few seconds and then releasing the tension. Feel the difference between relaxation and tension.

- **Shoulders:** Pull them down towards the floor. Think about the tension this creates and then let go. Feel the difference. Circle your shoulders once backwards, once forwards.
- **Arms and elbows:** Tense your arms and then bend your elbows. Think about the tension this creates and then let go.
- **Hands:** Pull your hands back at the wrist, stretching all your fingers as much as you can. Think about the tension this creates and then let go (let your hands fall back on your thighs).
- **Hips:** Pull your hips open, so your legs roll apart. Stop pulling and feel the difference.
- **Knees:** Pull the angle of your knees open, tightening your thigh muscles and slightly lifting your heel as you do this. Stop pulling and feel the difference.
- **Legs/ankles:** Pull your toes upwards towards your face and then point your toes to the floor. Stop pulling and feel the difference.
- **Lower back:** Pull the curve of your back into the chair and then relax and let go.

Take a breath in through your nose and out through your mouth (your tummy should rise while your chest should stay still). Count in for two and out for four twice (your tummy should fall as you breathe out) before returning to the exercise.

- **Neck:** Pull your chin downwards towards your chest. Don't tense your shoulders. Stop pulling and feel the difference.
- **Eyebrows:** Pull your eyebrows up towards your hair line and then relax. Feel the difference.
- **Mouth/jaw:** With your lips together, pull your jaw down towards the floor. Think about the tension this creates and then relax. Pull your tongue down in to the bottom of your mouth, behind your teeth. Stop pulling and feel the difference.
- Wiggle your fingers and toes. Breathe out.
- Slowly open your eyes and take a moment to come back to the present after you carry out any relaxation exercise, and resume your next task slowly.

Remember! Don't worry - you may not feel much effect at first – it will still be working and it may take time before you feel in a more relaxed state. Keep practising!