

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a skill used when feeling stressed—it counteracts the muscle tension normally associated with stress. It can also be very helpful to your sleep if you struggle with sleep. The goal is to tense a group of muscles for about 5-10 seconds as you breathe in. As you breathe out, relax the muscles and take a few seconds to notice how your muscles feel relaxed.

1. Get into a comfortable position either sitting or laying down (your choice)
2. Start with a prayer relinquishing your anxiety to God. This can be a simple phrase such as "God, I give you this anxiety." Hold onto this phrase and repeat it as you go through each body part.
3. As you go through each body part, take 5-10 seconds to tense the muscle as tight as you can as you inhale. While holding that tension, repeat your relinquishing prayer. Then release the tension with an exhale and take notice of how your muscle feels and how different it feels from the tension you created.
4. Take three deep breaths. 3 seconds in and 6 seconds out. As you do that, think about 1 Peter 5:7 which says, *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."*
5. Starting with your feet. As you inhale, tense them as hard as you can, curling your toes tightly into your feet. "God, I give you this anxiety." Then release

with an exhale and notice the difference in how they feel.

6. Move up to your calves. Inhale and point or flex your feet and feel the tension in the calves. "God, I give you this anxiety." Then release with an exhale and notice the difference.
7. Onto the thighs. Squeeze your thighs together as tight as you can as you inhale. "God, I give you this anxiety." Release them as you exhale and take notice of the difference.
8. Pause and think of Psalms 27:14, *"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."* Keep moving through this exercise relinquishing the anxiety to God where He wants it and wait on Him to answer your prayer.
9. Move to the torso. Inhale and suck your belly button to your spine. "God, I give you this anxiety." Then release with an exhale and notice the difference in how your torso feels.
10. Inhale and squeeze your shoulder blades together. "God, I give you this anxiety." Then release your back with an exhale and notice the difference in how it feels.
11. Lift and squeeze your shoulders toward your ears, inhale, and focus on the tension in the shoulders. "God, I give you this anxiety." Then release them with an exhale and notice the difference in how they feel.
12. Psalm 55:22 says, *"Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken."*
13. Shift your focus to your arms. Inhale and make fists while squeezing them toward your shoulders. "God, I give you this anxiety." Release them with an exhale and notice the difference in how you feel.

14. Feel your hands. Inhale and make a fist by curling your fingers into your palm and squeezing, turning your knuckles white if you can. "God, I give you this anxiety." Then release your hands as you exhale and notice the difference in how they feel.
15. Inhale and scrunch your facial features to the center of your face. "God, I give you this anxiety." Then release your face on an exhale and notice the difference in how it feels.
16. Now, put it all together and tense the entire body. Curling the toes into your feet while pointing or flexing them, squeezing your thighs together, sucking the belly button in, squeezing the shoulder blades together as you lift and squeeze them up toward your ears, making fists and curling them toward the shoulders, then finally scrunching your face like a sour lemon. Hold here for a few seconds repeating our phrase one more time, "God, I give you this anxiety." and release it all with a big exhale and notice the difference.
17. Before you open your eyes I want you to sit with one final verse. Matthew 11:28-30 says, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*
18. Open your eyes.