



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a relaxation technique that can be used to calm the body and mind. It is a direct way to help address the symptoms associated with the fight, flight, or freeze response caused by stress. It can help those who struggle with falling asleep and may reduce some symptoms of chronic pain. With practice, progressive muscle relaxation can help to promote awareness of tension and the development of skills necessary to relax.

Practicing Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. **Position yourself.** Find a comfortable position for this exercise. Laying down flat on your back or sitting in such a way that your body can relax are both good options. If possible, consider dimming the lights and removing distracting objects or sounds. Closing your eyes, if comfortable, may help to promote deeper relaxation.
2. **Contract muscle groups.** While inhaling, contract one group of muscles for 5-10 seconds. Hold the tension tightly in this area. Then, exhale and release the tension. Focus on how the change from tension to relaxation feels. Consider using imagery to heighten the experience, such as imagining the release of tension being the release of stress leaving your body.
3. **Relax for a moment.** After releasing the tension, relax for a moment to experience the change in how the muscle group feels before moving on to the next muscle group.
4. **Repeat.** Repeat steps two and three as you work your way through all muscle groups in your body. If time allows, follow the recommended sequence below that starts at the feet and works up to the head. If time is limited, abbreviate the sequence and focus on larger sections of the body (such as “left leg”).
 - Feet (curl toes and arch feet)
 - Calves
 - Upper thighs
 - Buttocks
 - Abs and lower back (engage abs and tilt hips)
 - Chest and upper back (round shoulders and tense chest)
 - Shoulders (lifting shoulders to your ears)
 - Neck (roll neck back)
 - Hands
 - Arms
 - Jaw
 - Face (squint eyes tightly, grimace)
5. **Return and Relax.** Return to any muscle groups

where tension still remains. After completing the sequence, take time to breathe deeply and notice the change in how your body feels. Give yourself credit for taking time to promote your well-being.



Mobility Restrictions

If you have physical restrictions that inhibit your ability to follow the suggested sequence, you are encouraged to adapt the sequence to work for you and your body. Progressive muscle relaxation can work very effectively, even when limited to select muscle groups. For example, if a disability or injury prohibits the movement of the lower body, focus on the upper body.

Counseling Services

Counseling services are available to support Anoka Technical College students. A counselor can talk with you about any concerns or difficulties you are facing, provide support, and help in developing strategies and skills to promote wellness and goal achievement. Counseling services are confidential and free. You are encouraged to reach out for support.

To learn more about counseling services, visit: <https://www.anokatech.edu/student-services/counseling-services/>

To schedule an appointment with a counselor, visit the weblink above or call 763-576-7860.