

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Script 2

Find a comfortable spot to sit or lie down. Take a moment to remove your shoes and your watch if you're wearing one. And if any clothing feels as if it is tight around your body feel free to loosen it like your belt, or a tie, or your collar. And then get real comfortable on the floor or a chair. Wherever, you happen to be.

And take a nice slow deep breath, focusing all your attention on your breathing. And as you breathe, throughout this exercise, allow your stomach, not your chest, to expand. When you begin to expand your chest, you actually begin to place pressure on a bundle of nerves that begins to accentuate the stress response. In this exercise we're trying to enhance a relaxation response. So the best way to do this is to allow your stomach to rise up or extend out as you inhale, and then allow it to descend, come back in, as you exhale. And now with this in mind, take a nice slow deep breath, comfortably slow and comfortably deep. And let all thoughts, all interruptions, fade from your mind as you exhale.

The technique that we're going to combine with this breathing exercise is called progressive muscular relaxation. And with this exercise you'll be asked to identify a specific muscle group, and try to contract that muscle group as hard as possible, at 100% intensity, and you'll be asked to hold that for a few moments, and then release that tension and allow the muscle group to become completely relaxed. Following that contraction, you'll be asked to duplicate that same contraction, but this time at half the intensity; this time at 50%. And you'll be asked to hold that for a moment, and then release, allowing all the tension to disappear. And then following that contraction at half the intensity of 100%, you'll be asked to do one final contraction at 5%. And 5% is ever so slight, as if just too barely to recognize the fact that you do have muscles that can contract.

To begin with, I'd like you to focus all your attention right now on the muscles of your forehead. And when I ask you to, I'd like to have you contract those muscles of your forehead and even your eyes as hard as possible. Ready? Contract. Hold it. Keep holding it. Feel that tension. And now relax. Allow all the tension to fade away. Feel how relaxed these muscles are. Try and compare this feeling to what you just sensed at 100% contraction. This comparison should make those muscles feel even more relaxed. And now with that same muscle group, the muscles of your forehead and eyes, try and contract those muscles at half the intensity you just did. Ready? Contract. Hold it. Keep holding. And relax. And now once again, allow all the tension to fade away, feel how relaxed those muscles are, and now finally I'd like you to focus

your attention on those very same muscles, but this time when you hear the word contract, only allow a 5% contraction. Only 5% of 100% intensity. And a 5% contraction is just barely feeling a twinge go through your forehead. Ready? Contract. Hold it. Hold it. And now relax. Feel how relaxed those muscles on the forehead and eyes are. Think to yourself right now they feel very calm, very peaceful, and very relaxed. And to enhance this relaxation sensation throughout those muscles, take a nice, comfortably slow deep breath.

Now I'd like you to focus your attention on the muscles of your neck and shoulders. In a moment I'm going to ask you to contract those muscles as hard as you can at 100% intensity and to do this you may actually feel your shoulders rise up toward your ears. Ready? Contract. Hold it. Even tighter. Hold it. Hold it. And relax. And now allow all the tension to fade away from your neck and shoulders. Feel how relaxed these muscles are right now. You should feel very calm and very relaxed, just by comparison to what you just did. Now in a moment I'm going to ask you to contract these same muscles at half the intensity. In your mind try and gage what 50% of that last contraction was. Ready? Contract. Hold it. Keep holding it. And relax. Feel how relaxed those muscles are. Try to compare this feeling that you have right now with what you just did at 50% intensity contraction. And this comparison should make you feel even more relaxed in the muscles of the neck and shoulders. And now finally I'd like you to contract at 5%. Again 5% is very, very slight. It's like feeling the fabric of clothing around your neck and shoulders if you're wearing a shirt. Ready? Contract. Hold it. And relax. And once again feel how relaxed these muscles are. They should feel very calm, and very relaxed. And to enhance this feeling of relaxation in the neck and shoulders, once again take a very slow, comfortably deep breath.

And then follow that with one more, even slower and even deeper breath.

Now direct your attention to your hands and forearms. In a moment I'm going to ask you to make a fist. I want you clench your fist, both right and left hand, as hard as you can. As if you're going to try and hit something. And this contraction is 100%, so really feel as much force and intensity as you can. Ready? Contract. Hold it, hold it, keep holding it even harder, and now relax. And allow your hands to open up, let the fingers stretch, and then coil back to a comfortable position. Feel a sense of relaxation tingle through your hands and through your forearms. Feel how relaxed they are right now compared to what you just did a moment ago. Now in a moment I'm going to ask you to contract these same muscles at half the intensity that you just performed. In your mind try and estimate what that would feel like. Ready? Contract. Hold it. Keep holding it. And now relax. And again allow your fingers to expand out, and then come back in to a comfortable position. Feel the muscles of your hand and forearms completely relaxed now. Try and compare this feeling to what you just did and think to yourself that this comparison brings across even a greater sense of relaxation. Now in a moment I'm going to ask

you to contract these same muscles at 5% and a 5% contraction is like trying to hold an empty eggshell in the palm of your hand. Enough strength to hold this, and enough gentleness not to crack it. Think to yourself what that would feel like, and when I ask you to contract, try to imagine what that would be like. Ready? Contract. Hold it, hold it, and now relax. Now allow your muscles in your hands and forearms to completely relax. Feel how calm and rested they are right now. And to enhance this process, once again take a nice slow deep breath, and as you inhale, feel the air come into your nose and mouth, down to your lungs, and feel your stomach rise up nice and slow and descend back down as you exhale. And then follow that with one more even slower and even deeper breath. And feel your whole body relax. But, especially the muscles of your forehead, neck and shoulders, arms and forearms, and hands.

Now the last groups of muscles we are going to try in this exercise are the muscles of your stomach area, the abdominal muscles. In a moment I'm going to ask you to contract these muscles as hard as you can at 100% intensity and in doing so I want you to imagine if someone is going to try to punch you in the stomach and you are going to try to block that punch with a really intense contraction. Ready? Contract. Hold it. Even tighter. Hold it. Hold it. And now relax. And as you relax, think to yourself how calm these muscles feel now with what you just did. And by comparison your whole abdominal area should feel very comfortable and very relaxed. And now I want you to try to imagine what it would feel like to contract the same muscle group at half the intensity. It's as if someone you know in a joking manner tries to throw you a punch. And just in case they make contact you want to have some protection there, so you tense your muscles, this time at 50%. Ready?> Contract. Hold it. Hold it. And relax. And feel a complete sense of relaxation throughout your whole abdominal cavity and specifically with the muscles of your stomach. Now finally I'd like you take one more contraction to this area and this time only 5%. And 5% in this region is synonymous with the feeling of clothing over your stomach. It's a very slight contraction, with hardly any movement whatsoever. Ready? Contract. Hold it. And now relax. And now feel this whole area become completely relaxed as you allow all the tension to dissipate with your next breath. And to enhance this process, take a very slow, comfortably deep breath. And as you exhale think to yourself, my abdominal area feels calm and relaxed.

And now take a moment to focus your attention throughout your whole body.

Feel how relaxed your whole body is, especially the muscles of your forehead and eyes, neck and shoulders, forearms and hands, and your stomach area. These are but a few of the muscle groups that you can use in this exercise of progressive muscular relaxation. Now take one final slow deep breath and this time as you exhale think to yourself the phrase "my body is calm and relaxed." And although you feel relaxed, you don't feel tired or sleepy, you don't feel fatigued, actually you feel very energized, very rejuvenated and you've allowed your body a sense of

restoration. Think to yourself right now about your surroundings, the room that you're in, time of day, and perhaps what you're going to do once you finish this exercise. And when you feel ready, very slowly begin to open your eyes to a soft gaze in front of you, and you begin to stretch your body, your arms and shoulders, and your legs, your feet, and at your leisure, when you feel ready, you can move to a more comfortable position either sitting or standing.