



Fairfax County Neighborhood & Community Services

#NCScconnects Virtual Activity



Activity: Stress Management; PMR (Progressive Muscle Relaxation)

Category: Prevention, Health & Wellness

Suggested Grade Level: Grades 7-12

Description: When you have anxiety or stress in your life, one of the ways your body responds is with muscle tension. Progressive muscle relaxation is a method that helps relieve that tension.

Supplies:

- Your body, mindfulness, and memory

Instructions: Choose a place where you will not be interrupted. Lie down on your back and stretch out comfortably on a carpeted floor or yoga mat.

1. Breathe in and tense the first muscle group (see below). Breathe in hard, but not to the point of pain or cramping, for four to 10 seconds.
2. Breathe out and suddenly and completely relax the muscle group (do not relax it gradually).
3. Relax for 10 to 20 seconds before you work on the next muscle group. Notice the difference between how the muscles feel when they are tense and when they are relaxed.
4. When you are finished with all the muscle groups, count backward from five to one to bring your focus back to the present.

Muscle Group	What to Do
Hands	Clench them.
Wrists and forearms	Extend them and bend your hands back at the wrist.
Biceps and upper arms	Clench your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows, and flex your biceps.
Shoulders	Shrug them (raise toward your ears).
Forehead	Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
Around the eyes and bridge of the nose	Close your eyes as tightly as you can. (Remove contact lenses before you start the exercise.)
Cheeks and jaws	Smile as widely as you can.
Around the mouth	Press your lips together tightly. (Check your face for tension. You just want to use your lips.)



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Back of the neck	Press the back of your head against the floor or chair.
Front of the neck	Touch your chin to your chest. (Try not to create tension in your neck and head.)
Chest	Take a deep breath and hold it for four to 10 seconds.
Back	Arch your back up and away from the floor or chair.
Stomach	Suck it into a tight knot. (Check your chest and stomach for tension.)
Hips and buttocks	Press your buttocks together tightly.
Thighs	Clench them hard.
Lower legs	Point your toes toward your face. Then point your toes away, and curl them downward at the same time. (Check the area from your waist down for tension.)

Takeaways: Learn new stress management and mindfulness techniques. Learn how to tense and relax each muscle group.



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