

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

PMR is used to relax and reduce anxiety levels, improve pain tolerance, and work as biofeedback. It is based on the idea that if we could relax voluntary muscles, the involuntary muscles would also relax. PMR focuses on tensing and relaxing muscles one muscle group at a time to promote relaxation and reduce some physical reactions.

Initial Sessions

Sessions may initially last up to 30 minutes as athletes learn the strategy. Once mastered, they can perform the technique more quickly.

Preparation

- **Environment:** Find a quiet, comfortable place to sit or lie down without disruptions.
- **Guidance:** Use a calm, relaxed voice to guide the athlete through the process.

Script for Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Breathing and Initial Relaxation

1. **Start with Deep Breaths:**
 - "Take five slower, deeper breaths."

Focus on Specific Muscle Groups

2. **Right Foot:**
 - "Let's start with the focus on our feet, the right foot first. Notice the tension in the muscles of your right foot. Now increase the tension to a medium level and then release that tension, noticing how the muscles feel as you do. Exhale as you let any tightness flow out of the tensed muscles. Repeat with more tension this time, hold while you notice what maximum tension feels like, then relax and notice the process of releasing tension to nothing. The muscles should then feel warm, heavy, or loose. Specifically try to notice the difference between the zero, minimum, medium, and maximum levels of tension. Remain with the right foot relaxed for 15 seconds or more."

Move Up the Body

3. Right Leg:

- "Move up the right leg to the ankle, lower leg, and upper leg (front and back). Repeat the tension-relaxation steps for each muscle group."

4. Left Foot and Leg:

- "Repeat the process with the left foot and up the leg."

Specific Muscle Groups to Include

5. Foot:

- "Curl your toes downward and then upward."

6. Ankle and Lower Leg:

- "Tighten your calf muscle by pointing your toes away from you, then pull your toes towards your knee and notice the tension on the front of the lower leg."

7. Upper Leg:

- "Engage front thigh muscles by pulling the kneecap to the hip and the back of the thigh by straightening the leg if sitting or pulling the heel back along the floor but not letting the foot move."

8. Hand:

- "Clench your fist, then spread your fingers wide. Notice where the tension is and at what level."

9. Entire Arm:

- "Tighten your arm by drawing your forearm up towards your shoulder and 'make a muscle' while clenching your fist."

10. Buttocks:

- "Tighten by pulling your buttocks together."

11. Stomach:

- "Suck your stomach in, pulling your belly button to your spine, and then release."

12. Chest:

- "Tighten by taking a deep breath and pushing your hands together in front of your chest."

13. Upper Back:

- "Draw your shoulder blades together and down."

14. Neck and Shoulders:

- "Raise your shoulders up to touch your ears several times and then down so your neck is very long."

15. Mouth and Jaw:

- "Open your mouth wide enough to stretch the hinges of your jaw and clench your teeth. Notice your tongue, press it up into your palate then rest gently behind but not touching your bottom teeth."

16. Eyes:

- "Clench your eyelids tightly shut, then open them wide."

17. Forehead:

- "Raise your eyebrows as far as you can, then frown."

Final Relaxation**18. Complete Relaxation:**

- "After completing all muscle groups, take a few moments to enjoy the relaxation. Notice how your body feels now compared to when you started. Enjoy the feeling of calm and relaxation."