



Relaxation

“In a Nutshell”

Muscle Relaxation Exercises:

1. Three Deep Breaths

As you take each breath in, feel your Lungs expand, feel the pressure across your chest wall and then, as you exhale, think about your chest wall falling and the breath you let go of being the tension leaving your body. Once expired, the chest muscles are more relaxed and comfortable.

2. Fist Clenching

When you clench your fists, concentrate on the feelings you experience, the tightness of the muscles and the heat created. The tension reaches up into your elbow and is almost as if a knot is created there. As you let go, imagine that knot releasing and the tension flowing down from the elbow, through the wrist and from your fingertips.

This exercise is an easy one to do anywhere. Clench your fists in your pockets or grip your supermarket trolley tightly. The next exercise again involves fist clenching and the raising of your fist to your shoulders.

3. Facial Tension

As you squeeze your eyes closed and wrinkle your forehead, concentrate on the tightness of the muscles involved. Even though you are only dealing with part of your face, the tension can be felt over the head, across your cheeks and down into your lower face. This can help you realise how tension can be spread around your body by one simple action. Relax those muscles again and the face will instantly feel more comfortable.

Clenching the jaw and lips, and raising your chin, not only involves those muscles but those of your neck and shoulders. When the whole of the face is involved, think of all the discomfort it causes and how it could be quite easy for tension headaches and shoulder and neck pain to develop if you let it continue for any length of time. Obviously this exercise is difficult to do in public but you can clench your teeth and press your lips together if you recognise tension in that area.

4. Shoulders

Many people describe tension in their shoulders as knotted and painful. Again, as you tense this area, imagine those knots tightening up in your shoulders and also in your neck and shoulder blades. When you realise the tension, let each knot become loose and think of the tension flowing down from your neck, over and through the shoulders, down your arms and from your fingertips. As you draw your shoulder blades together in the next exercise and pull your stomach muscles in, think about the feelings of tension now present between your neck and groin. As you let go of the tension, imagine that your body has no inner structure and that it is just like a deflated balloon, sinking into the chair as if that too has no structure but is soft and yielding.

5. Leg Tensing

As you raise first one leg and then the other, and then both together concentrate on the knots of tension in your curled feet, the tightness of your calf muscles, upward right into your groin and lower back. Concentrate on those spots and then imagine them slowly loosening and the tension flowing from the base of your spine, down your legs and from your feet.

This exercise can be adapted into day-to-day life by pressing your feet firmly into the floor whilst sitting down. The tension will be felt from your toes up into the small of your back.

Helpful tips:

Throughout the session, it will be more helpful if you close your eyes. If you are unable to do this with your eyes closed, then select a point on the carpet to focus upon.

As you go about your daily routine, try to become aware of where your specific areas of tension lie. You do not have to do all the exercises but you will benefit from working on your own problem areas and using the deep breathing exercises.

Always remember

If at any time you feel pain whilst tensing, relax that area and just concentrate on letting go.

If at any time during the session you feel that you cannot continue, end the session.