

Sleep

Progressive Relaxation Exercise

Using a progressive relaxation exercise in bed can help you relax and promote restfulness.

Perform this exercise lying down in bed with the light out.



Start out with a few relaxing breaths. Breathe in deeply and as you exhale feel the tension begin to ebb away.

Move your awareness to your hands. Clench both of your fists for up to 5 seconds. Now release slowly for 15 seconds, imagining the tension ebbing out of your hands.

Move your attention to your arms. Draw your forearms toward your shoulders, creating a bicep. Hold for 5 seconds, now release slowly for 15 seconds, imagining the tension flowing out of your biceps.

Move your attention to your forehead. Inhale and lift your eyebrows and wrinkle your forehead. Hold for 5 seconds and then release slowly for 15 seconds as you exhale; feel the muscles of your forehead relaxing.

Move your attention to your face. Furrow your eye brows and purse your lips, trying to pull all your facial muscles towards your nose. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds, feeling your facial muscles relax as you do.

Bring your attention to your jaw. Clench your jaw tightly. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds. As you relax the muscles allow the tension to disappear. You may feel the mouth begin to open a little.

Now bring your awareness to your neck and shoulders. Shrug your shoulders towards your ears. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds. Now push your shoulder blades together. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds, feel the tension in your muscles ebb away.

Focus on your navel area. Try to draw your navel into your backbone. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds, feeling the tension in your abdominals dissipate.

Squeeze your buttocks together. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds. Feel the tension disappear.

Move to your thighs. Try not to contract your stomach as you tighten your upper thigh muscles. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds, feeling the tension dissipating.

Now down to your calves. Tighten your calf muscles by pointing your toes. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds and feel the tension disappear.

Bring all your attention to your feet. Curl your toes towards the ground. Hold for 5 seconds; now release slowly for 15 seconds, feeling the tension in your feet flow away.

Mentally scan your body for any residual tension. If you find any muscles with any residual tension, then tense and relax this area again.

Finally, feel a wave of relaxation, from the top of your head to the tip of your toes. When you are ready bring your awareness back to your breathing and slowly open your eyes.

Top tip: For a quick version start out with the relaxing breaths, then in turn, tense and relax the muscles in your forehead, face, jaw and neck and shoulders; then feel a wave of relaxation flow from the top of your head, through your face, jaw and neck to your shoulders.