

Progressive Relaxation

Your body needs relaxation to reduce stress and calm the fight-or-flight response. It helps to plan for about 20 minutes of relaxation every day when you can take time for yourself. Sit or lie comfortably, limiting distractions like phones. Put on some soft music or simply sit in silence. Then incorporate the progressive relaxation technique below.



How to do progressive relaxation

Progressive relaxation helps your whole body relax. To try this technique, follow these steps:

1. Find a quiet room. Sit in a comfortable chair or lie on your back.
2. Breathe in deeply to a slow count of 5. Feel your belly, chest, and back expand. Breathe out slowly to a count of 5. Do this for several minutes.
3. After a few minutes, breathe in deeply again, but this time tighten the muscles in your feet. Notice how it feels. Hold the tension for 3 seconds.
4. Breathe out while relaxing the tightened muscles. Notice how relaxed you feel.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 with another muscle group. You can move from your feet, calves, and thighs to your stomach, arms, and hands.

Remember the 4 A's

- Avoid a stressor. For example, if someone is smoking when you're trying to quit, leave the room.
- Alter how you deal with a stressor. For example, let the answering machine pick up if a constantly ringing phone is a stressor.
- Accept a stressor you can't change, like a job loss, by knowing that your feelings are normal.

- Adapt to some stressors. For example, when starting a new exercise program, instead of focusing on how hard it will be, think how good you will feel.

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