

Tense & Relax Method

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Tense & Relax is a method used to reduce stress and muscle tension and help reduce chronic pain. With regular practice, Tense & Relax helps you become familiar with what tension feels like and how to let it go.

You can combine Deep Breathing and Tense & Relax for deeper relaxation. First do Deep Breathing for 10 minutes and then do the Tense & Relax Method. You can use the instructions on the back of this page to learn how to breathe more deeply.

1. **Find a quiet place to sit or lie down.** Be sure you are as comfortable as possible.
2. **Slowly and gently tense the muscles in your right foot.** Hold the tension for a few seconds and then as you breathe out relax the right foot completely. You can say or think the word RELAX as you relax the foot. Let go of any tension. Pause before you go to the next body part. **Do the same with the left foot.**
3. Next, **tense the muscles in your right lower leg (calf) muscles.** Hold the lower leg tightly or tensely for a few seconds then as you breathe out relax the muscles completely. Pause. **Do the same with the left lower leg.**
4. **Do the same tensing and relaxing of all the following muscle groups.** Be sure to let go of the tensing as you exhale and let the muscles relax as much as possible. Say or think the word RELAX as you let go of the tension. Be sure to pause between each body part:
 - Your right thigh (upper leg) then left thigh
 - Your inner legs by squeezing your legs together
 - Your buttock muscles by squeezing your bottom
 - Your abdomen (belly) muscles by contracting and sucking in your belly
 - Your right shoulder by pulling your shoulder up towards your ear
 - Your left shoulder by pulling your shoulder up towards your ear
 - Your jaw by clenching your teeth together gently
 - Your lips by squeezing your lips together
 - Your eyes by squeezing your eyes tightly
 - Your forehead by squeezing your eyebrows together.
5. Take some time to feel your breath again when you finish tensing and relaxing.

Used with permission from the Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States (CHAMPS)

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