

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Trauma related stress and anxiety can lead to muscle tension which in turn can cause pain and disrupt sleep and rest. Progressive muscle relaxation is something that anyone can do and it has the purposes of:

- Increasing our awareness of where we are experiencing muscle tension
- Promoting muscle relaxation
- Lowering our overall stress

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique

- Get into a comfortable position
- Take a few slow, deep breathsⁱ
- Tighten a specific muscle group as you breathe in
- Hold the tension for 5 seconds, but not so tight as to cause pain
- Release the muscle as you breathe out
- Rest for 10 seconds
- Go on to the next muscle group

Tips for Tightening Specific Muscles

Most can be done lying down, sitting, or standing. Hold the tightened muscles for 5 seconds and then relax the muscles completely (not gradually) for 10 seconds:

- **Legs** – straighten your knee, push your heel out and flex your toes backwards; point your toes away from your body; with one leg bent, slightly lift the other leg off the ground and tense your thigh; press your heel into the ground and tense the back of your thigh.
- **Arms** – raise your shoulders up towards your ears; make a fist with your hand; grip your hands together and try to pull them apart; extend your arms to your sides and reach your fingers out.
- **Face** – raise your eyebrows as high as you can; open your mouth wide; smile widely; clench the teeth together lightly; squeeze your eyes shut.
- **Stomach** – suck in your abdominal muscles
- **Back** – bring your head down and round your back up; lift your head and chest upwards

Additional Resources/Supporting Documents:

ⁱ Deep Breathing (8.10)