

Suggestion: Read these instructions into a tape recorder so that you can listen and do the exercise more easily. There is a short form at the end.

Progressive Deep Muscle Relaxation

Group #1: Hands and Wrists

Make your hands into tight fists; Squeeze hard until your knuckles turn white and hold for at least eight seconds (remember if you are recording or having a friend read the instructions, to pause at this point for at least eight seconds). Now let go. Let all the tightness and pain flow through your fingertips. Feel your fingers and wrists relax and become loose and limp. Notice the difference: your fists were tightened, you were feeling tension; when you let go, you began to relax. Stay relaxed for at least 15 seconds. Now clench your fists again; feel the tension. Now relax. Notice the difference between the two feelings.

Group #2: Biceps and Triceps

Put your right hand around your left wrist. Now try to pull your left arm in towards your body, but at the same time, push outwards with your right arm. Focus on your lower arms. Feel how tight they are getting. Now relax your arms and feel the difference. Feel the tension flow out through your fingers and disappear. Now repeat the exercise. Notice the difference between the feelings of tension and the feelings of relaxation. Repeat the exercise with the left hand on the right wrist. Again, focus on the tension as you pull your right arm toward your body and push outward with your left arm. Then relax. Feel the tension disappear. Repeat. Now wrap your arms around yourself, as though you were hugging yourself, but instead of hugging, squeeze yourself very hard using your upper arms. Squeeze hard and focus on your biceps. Feel the tension. Now relax and let go. Feel the warmth flow through your arms. Repeat the exercise, first tensing then relaxing.

Group #3: Shoulders

Reach above yourself; stretch your arms as far as they will go while you stay seated. Feel your shoulder muscles tighten. Then relax, let your arms fall to your sides. Let your shoulders and arms relax. Make them loose and comfortable. Now repeat the exercise. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation.

Group #4: Neck

Bend your head downward so that your chin points into your chest. Push your chin hard against your chest. Then return your head to the headrest. Focus on the tension at the front of the neck (the pull on the back of the neck is strain and should be ignored). Now relax. Feel the tension disappear from the front of your neck. Now bend your neck backwards as though you were trying to see the wall behind you. Push the base of your head downward into your back. Feel the tension in the back of your neck (again, ignore the strain in the front of your neck). Now return your head to an upright position. Feel the difference between the tension in the back of your neck and the feeling of relaxation. Now bend your head downwards toward your right shoulder (don't raise your shoulder); push your right ear downwards toward your shoulder. Feel the tension on the right side of your neck. Then return your head to an upright position and relax. Now bend your head toward your left shoulder. Feel the tension on the left side of your neck. Relax. Repeat all four positions: front, back, right, left. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation in your neck muscles.

Group #5:
Tongue and
Mouth

Put the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth right behind your front teeth. Push hard until your tongue feels solid and tight and hard. Let your tongue rest naturally in a comfortable position. Once again push your tongue against the roof of your mouth and then relax.

Open your mouth as wide as you can. Feel the tension in your jaw. Now relax. Feel the tension disappear. Repeat this exercise. Now purse your lips together. Tighten your lips together as hard as you can. Then relax. Feel the tension around your mouth disappear. Repeat.

Group#6:
Eyes, Nose, and
Forehead

Close your eyes as tightly as possible. Squeeze your eyelids together so that your nose wrinkles up. Keep squeezing. Now relax your eyes and nose. You don't have to open your eyes all the way; just let your eyelids relax until all the tightness is gone and they feel very comfortable. Tightly close your eyes again. Then relax. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Focus on your forehead and tense the muscles until you are frowning and your forehead is wrinkled. Now relax. Feel your forehead becoming smooth. Allow the relaxation to spread from your forehead to your scalp. Now frown again and then relax.

Group #7:
Back

Straighten your arms out from your sides and stretch them backwards as far as they will go. Press your shoulder blades toward the back of the chair and push the center of your body forward. Feel the muscles in your upper back tense. Now let your arms fall to your sides and your shoulders hunch forward. Feel the tension and tightness disappear. Repeat. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation.

Group #8:
Stomach

Take in a deep breath and suck in your stomach as hard as you can. Try to continue breathing while you hold in your stomach. Try to touch your backbone with the front wall of your stomach. Now let go and relax until all the tightness is gone. Feel the difference between tension and relaxation in your stomach region. Now take a deep breath and push your stomach forward as though you were preparing for a punch in your abdomen. Then relax. Breathe deeply and exhale slowly. Repeat both exercises: pulling in your stomach and then relaxing, and pushing out your stomach and relaxing.

Group #9:
Thighs

Put your right hand on your left knee. Push your knee upwards and at the same time push down with your hand. Focus on the thigh muscle and push harder with that muscle. Feel the tension in your thigh (you'll

also feel tension in your arm). Now relax. Repeat the exercise using your left hand and right leg. Feel the tension in your right thigh. Relax. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Repeat the exercise for both legs.

Group #10:
Calves and Feet

With your legs supported (use a footstool if you are not seated in a reclining lounge chair), allow your thighs to remain relaxed while you draw your toes of both feet upward toward your head and tense the calf muscles. If you feel any cramping during this exercise, relax immediately, and “shake out” your legs. Now relax. Feel the difference between tension and relaxation. Now point both feet downwards and feel the tension on the front of your legs and ankles. Then relax. Once again point the feet upwards and relax. Then point the feet downwards and relax.

Group #11:
Toes

Now sit up straight in your chair with your feet flat on the floor. Curl your toes downward. Push them into the floor. Now relax. Repeat.

Once you have tensed and relaxed all your muscle groups, close your eyes and try to relax all muscle groups. When you are ready to get up, open your eyes, stretch your body, and slowly rise from the chair.

Instructions for Shortened Form of DMR:

The shortened form of DMA reduces the eleven muscle groups to four groups: arms, shoulders, and neck; face; back and stomach, lower limbs. Perform each exercise twice.

Group #1: Arms,
Shoulders & Neck

Move your arms toward the center of your body and bend both arms at the elbow. Tighten your hands into fists and simultaneously tense the Muscles in your upper arms and shoulders. Hold for ten seconds and then Relax for fifteen to twenty seconds.

Group #2 Face

Tense your facial muscles by wrinkling your forehead and pursing your lips. Hold for ten seconds. Then relax for fifteen to twenty seconds.

Group #4: Back and
Stomach

Take a deep breath and suck in your stomach as hard as possible for eight to ten seconds. Then exhale and relax for fifteen to twenty seconds.

Group #4: Lower Limbs

With your legs supported on a foot rest, straighten both legs. Tense the muscles of your entire leg and pull your toes toward your head (keeping your feet on the stool). Hold for eight to ten seconds and then relax for fifteen to twenty seconds.