

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

*Tense, release, and notice the difference*

Stress often shows up as tension we don't notice. By gently tightening one muscle group at a time and then letting it go, you learn to recognise tension, and to release it more easily, wherever you are.



## Before You Begin

### Find a quiet spot

Sit or lie somewhere comfortable, loosen tight clothing.

### Breathe slowly

Take a few calm breaths before you start.

### Tension, not strain

Tighten about half-way. It should never hurt.

### Skip what's sore

Leave out any injured or painful area.

## The Sequence *Work through each group in order, tensing then releasing*

|   |                                                                          |  |    |                                                                         |  |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | <b>Hands</b><br>Make tight fists.                                        |  | 6  | <b>Jaw</b><br>Press your teeth together, gently.                        |  |
| 2 | <b>Upper arms</b><br>Bend your elbows and tighten the tops of your arms. |  | 7  | <b>Chest and back</b><br>Breathe in and draw your shoulder blades back. |  |
| 3 | <b>Shoulders</b><br>Lift them up towards your ears.                      |  | 8  | <b>Stomach</b><br>Pull your stomach muscles in tight.                   |  |
| 4 | <b>Forehead</b><br>Raise your eyebrows high.                             |  | 9  | <b>Legs</b><br>Straighten your legs and press your heels down.          |  |
| 5 | <b>Eyes and cheeks</b><br>Squeeze your eyes gently shut.                 |  | 10 | <b>Feet</b><br>Curl your toes downwards.                                |  |

### Before

How tense do I feel? (0 = fully relaxed)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### After

How tense do I feel now?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### Making it work for you

- Practise once a day, for about 15 minutes.
- If your mind wanders, gently come back to the next group.
- Over time, try releasing without tensing first.

*Tension comes and goes. With practice, letting go becomes something you can do anywhere.*