

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation is good to do when you are stressed out, sad, angry, or nervous. It buys you time to calm down and prepare good solutions to your problems. You can do it quickly (in a couple minutes), or take your time (20 minutes). You can do this in public, since it's not very noticeable. However, it is usually more effective when you're alone. (If you're in a crowded place, steal away to a restroom stall, if possible...)
2. Sit or stand comfortably, but straight.
3. Close your eyes. (Oops, once you have the rest of this memorized...)
4. Take three deep breaths—in and out—through your nose.
5. Starting at your feet, feel them TOTALLY relax, and become even floaty-feeling.
6. Then, think of each body part as you move up your body. As you do, each part relaxes.
7. VERY SLOWLY, think of and relax—ankles, calves, shins, knees, thighs, hamstrings, bottom, abdomen, lower back, stomach, middle back, spine, chest, upper back, shoulders, upper arms, lower arms, wrists, hands, fingers, neck, chin, tongue, eyes, forehead, top-of-your-head.
8. If you want to go back down again, that can be even better.
9. The only way Progressive Muscle Relaxation can be effective is if you practice it when you're not upset. That way it becomes a kind of habit. You can train yourself to automatically think of it when you're stressed out, mad, sad, angry, or nervous. It's also a great way to fall asleep...
10. When you're upset, your brain has difficulties coming up with good ideas. It is usually not how upset you feel that makes a situation terrible. What makes things really bad is when you react to situations while you're upset. It is absolutely worth it to take a couple minutes to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Then, come back to the situation with a clearer head, and problem-solving is a little easier.

