

ACTIVITY 4

Tense & Relax Exercise

Read steps 1-3 before beginning.

Instructions:

1. Take Blood Pressure and write result on your Participant Results Form.
2. Make yourself as comfortable as possible in a seated position; try to sit up straight with good posture with your hands resting in your lap. You will need to read through this relaxation practice the first time or two. After that, it will become second nature. To save time, please pick 2 or 3 areas of the body to try the technique on.

The simplified version of this entire exercise is to tense each muscle group in your body, one at a time; hold the tension for 2 seconds; exhale and release all the tension. Move on to the next muscle group.

In this exercise we start at your feet and work your way up to your head.

Here we go...

1. Relaxation of the feet and calves:
 - a. Flex your feet (pull toes toward the knees)
 - b. Contract calf muscles and muscles of lower leg
 - c. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
 - d. Take a deep breath
 - e. As you exhale say the word "RELAX" and let the tension go

2. Relaxation of the knees and upper thighs:
 - a. Straighten your knees and squeeze your legs together
 - b. Contract your thigh muscles and all the muscles of your legs
 - c. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
 - d. Take a deep breath
 - e. As you exhale say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

3. Relaxation of the hips and buttocks
 - a. Tense the buttock muscles by squeezing them inward and upward
 - b. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
 - c. Take a deep breath
 - d. As you exhale say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

4. Relaxation of the abdomen
 - a. Observe your abdomen rising and falling with each breath
 - b. Exhale and press your navel toward the spine then tense the abdomen
 - c. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
 - d. Take a deep breath
 - e. As you exhale say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

5. Relaxation of the upper back
 - a. Draw the shoulder blades together to the midline of the body
 - b. Contract the muscles across the upper back
 - c. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
 - d. Take a deep breath
 - e. As you exhale say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

6. Relaxation of the Arms and Palms of the Hands
 - a. Turn palms face down and make a tight fist in each hand
 - b. Raise and stretch both arms with fists
 - c. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
 - d. Take a deep breath
 - e. As you exhale say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

7. Relaxation of the Chin, Neck, and Shoulders
 - a. Drop your chin to your chest
 - b. Draw your shoulders up toward your ears
 - c. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
 - d. Take a deep breath
 - e. As you exhale say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

8. Relaxation of the Jaw and Facial muscles
 - a. Clench your teeth together
 - b. Tense the muscles in the back of your jaw
 - c. Turn the corners of your mouth into a tight smile
 - d. Wrinkle the bridge of your nose and squeeze your eyes shut
 - e. Tense all facial muscles in toward the center of your face
 - f. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
 - g. Take a deep breath
 - h. As you exhale say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

9. Relaxation of the Forehead

- a. Raise eyebrows up and tense the muscles across the forehead and scalp
- b. Feel the tension build and hold the tension
- c. Take a deep breath
- d. As you exhale say the word “RELAX” and let the tension go

10. Intensification of Relaxation throughout the Body

- a. Focus on relaxation flowing from the crown of your head
- b. Over your face
- c. Down the back of your neck and shoulders
- d. Down your body through your arms and hands
- e. Over your chest and abdomen
- f. Flowing through your hips and buttocks
- g. Into your thighs, your knees and calves
- h. And finally into your ankles and feet
- i. Continue to deep breath for several minutes in silence

11. Finishing the Tense & Relax Exercise

- a. Count backwards in your head from 3 to 1
- b. become aware of your surroundings (location, people, noises)
- c. Move your feet, legs, hands, arms, rotate your head
- d. open your eyes feeling re-energized, refreshed, and relaxed

3. Take Blood Pressure again and write result on your Participants Results Form.

WHY THIS WORKS...

The relaxation response is perhaps one of the most important skills you will use to gain control over your body. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognizes the relaxation response as having broad health benefits including the reduction of pain and restoration of sleep. In addition, research on the relaxation response has shown that this simple technique can: increase energy, decrease fatigue as well as increase arousal from a drowsy state. It can increase motivation, productivity, and improve decision-making ability. The relaxation response lowers stress hormone levels and lowers blood pressure.

Source: <http://www.med.umich.edu/painresearch/patients/Relaxation.pdf>