

Progressive Relaxation

(Deep Muscle Relaxation)

Audience:

Activity can be adapted for all levels K-12 (if needed, modify choice and number of directions for Kindergarten and First Grade students)

Purpose:

Students learn deep muscle relaxation as an easy stress reduction activity

Materials:

No materials needed (**Tip:** Show students diagrams/illustrations/model of human muscles to help them identify/visualize muscle groups in preparation for the exercise)

Content:

Teacher/facilitator introduces the concept that relaxation is a good way to reduce stress. Tell students that they are going to do an activity that will help them relax by tightening and releasing different muscle groups in their bodies. Students may sit or lay down on their backs (depending on space).

Demonstrate/model each step for students in preparation for their participation. Then **read and model** the following instructions to your students twice for each direction:

1. Raise your eyebrows and wrinkle your forehead. Try to touch your hairline with your eyebrows. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.
2. Make a frown. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.
3. Close your eyes as tightly as you can. Draw the corners of your mouth back with your lips closed. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.
4. Open your eyes and your mouth as wide as you can. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax. Feel the warmth and calmness in your face.
5. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Close your fist tightly. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax. Feel the warmth and calmness in your hands.
6. Stretch your arms out to the side. Pretend you are pushing against an invisible wall with your hands. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.
7. Bend your elbows and make a muscle in your upper arm. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax. Feel the tension leave your arms.
8. Lift your shoulders. Try to make your shoulders touch your ears. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.
9. Arch your back away from the back of your chair (or off the floor). Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.

10. Round your back. Try to push it against the back of your chair (or against the floor). Hold for 5 seconds...and relax. Feel the tension leaving your back.
11. Tighten your stomach muscles. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.
12. Tighten your hip and buttock muscles. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.
13. Tighten your thigh muscles by pressing your legs together as close as you can. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax.
14. Bend your ankles toward your body as far as you can. Hold for 5 seconds ...and relax.
15. Curl your toes under as far as you can. Hold for 5 seconds...and relax. Feel the tension leave your legs.
16. Tighten all the muscles in your whole body. Hold for ten seconds...and relax. Let your entire body be heavy and clam. Sit quietly (or lie quietly) and enjoy this feeling of relaxation for a couple of minutes.

Extension:

Practice this activity with the class at other times to help students acquire competency with the technique. It may also be useful to calm and focus students in transitions (e.g. after recess) using just a few of the directions. Encourage students to practice this activity on their own to reduce stress. Have students share this activity with a family member and/or take turns leading directions for the class periodically throughout the school year.