

Tense - relax exercise

This exercise is intended for the independent practice of relaxation. It is meant to support and complement other forms of psychological and bodily care and not to replace them.

It is a tension-relaxation-exercise. The purpose of the exercise, is to learn to recognise the difference between tension and relaxation, and to be able to sense in which parts of the body tenseness exists. By doing the exercise, you can help the body to relax. If a muscle is firstly tensed, afterwards, it becomes easier to relax it. (2s) If at any time the the exercise doesn't feel comfortable, you may stop. (5s)

Place yourself in a comfortable body position, seated or lying down. (2s)

You can do the exercises with your eyes open or closed. (2s)

If you do the exercises with your eyes closed, you can open them whenever you like. (2s)

Do the exercises at your own pace breathing evenly and calmly. (2s)

When you tense your muscles, breathe in gently. (2s)

When you relax them, breathe out gently. (2s)

If tensing some of your muscles doesn't feel comfortable, you can move on directly to the relaxation phase. (5s)

Begin the exercise by clenching your left hand into a fist. (2s)

Tense your hand as tightly as possible. (3s)

Feel the tension. (3s)

And relax. (5s)

Just allow your left hand to relax and your fingers to straighten. (2s)

Allow your left hand to become completely relaxed and heavy. (5s)

Notice, how different, tensing and relaxing feel. (10s)

Next, clench your right hand into a fist. (2s)

Clench it as tightly as possible. (3s)

Feel the tension. (3s)

And relax. (5s)

Just allow the fingers of your right hand to relax and straighten. (2s)

Allow the tension with every out breath to release more and more and more. (2s)

Just sense the relaxedness. (2s)

Notice, how different, relaxing feels compared to tensing. (10s)

Then, clench both your hands in a fist. (2s)

Breathe in gently and tense both your arms. (2s)

Feel the tension (2s)

Breathe out gently and let both your arms relax (2s)

Continue breathing at your own pace. (5s)

Just release the tension from your arms and let your fingers straighten. (2s)

Sense at this moment the pleasant warmth and relaxedness in your arms and fingers. (2s)

You can relax your arms more and more and more. (10s)

Next, tense your left leg by bending your ankle. (2s)

Focus on the tension. (2s)

Then allow your left leg to become completely relaxed so that it feels heavy against the floor or chair. (3s)

Just allow your left leg to relax. (3s)

Notice, how different tensing and relaxing feels in your left leg. (10s)

Then, tense your right leg by bending your ankle. (2s)

Sense the tension in the whole of your right leg. (2s)

And relax. (3s)

Let your right leg relax so that it feels heavy against the floor or chair. (3s)

Allow the whole of your leg to rest and relax more and more and more. (3s)

Notice once again, how different relaxing and tensing feel. (10s)

Next, tense both your legs at the same time. (2s)

Breathe in gently, and bend your ankles (2s)

Sense the tension in your legs. (2s)

Breathe out gently and relax your legs. (2s)

Continue breathing at your own pace. (3s)

Allow your leg muscles to relax more and more and more. (3s)

Sense their warmth and heaviness as they are resting on the floor or against the chair. (10s)

Next, push your lower back against the floor or chair. (2s)

Tense and suck in your stomach muscles (2s)

Hold the tension for a moment. (2s)

And relax. (3s)

Allow your stomach muscles to relax and let your whole body feel calm. (3s)

Sense how your stomach becomes softer and more and more relaxed. (10s)

Tense your chest by gently breathing in deeply - filling your lungs with air. (2s)

Hold your breath for a moment - and feel the tension. (2s)

Gently breathe out - allowing your lungs to empty completely. (2s)

Continue breathing at your own pace - and let your chest relax. (3s)

Let your whole body relax with every out breath. (3s)

Notice, how different tensing and relaxing feel. (5s)

Sense for a while the rhythm of your breathing - just as it is at this moment. (10s)

Next, raise both your shoulders towards your ears. (2s)

Feel the intense tension. (2s)

And relax. (3s)

Let both shoulders relax and become completely limp. (5s)

Notice, how different tensing and relaxing feel. (5s)

On every out breath you will relax more and more and more. (10s)

Next, tense your chin muscles by clenching your teeth together. (2s)

Sense the tension in your neck and in your jaw. (2s)

Hold it for a moment. (2s)

And relax. (3s)

Allow all the muscles around your neck and throat to relax. (2s)

And become completely limp. (10s)

Then, scrunch up your face muscles. (2s)

Sense the intense tension in your face. (1s) Make a grimace and scowl. (3s)

And relax. (3s)

Let your face muscles relax. (3s)

Relax your forehead (5s), relax your eyes (5s), relax your chin (5s), relax your lips (5s) and let your tongue relax. (5s)

Sense the relaxed expression on your face. (2s)

Notice, how different tensing and relaxing feel. (10s)

Now, at the end of the exercise sense how the whole of your body feels completely relaxed against the floor or chair. (3s)

The lower part of your body. (2s)

The middle part. (2s)

And the upper part all feel relaxed. (5s)

Sense, how the floor or chair supports you and that you are able to rest. Able to just be. (10s)

If you want, you can deepen your relaxation by breathing deeply in (3s) and out. (5s)

Allow the feeling of relaxation to spread throughout your whole body and mind. (10s)

You will feel after the exercises that your body has rested and that your mind is calm. (3s)

You will sense that you have received new energy. (3s)

What word could describe your state of being, when you are relaxed? It might be 'relaxedness' or 'calm' or some other pleasant expression. (5s)

By keeping this one word in mind, you can at anytime remember this state of relaxation, whenever you feel you want to or need to. (10s)

Begin now to slowly bring yourself back to the present moment: start stretching and move with tiny movements your hands and feet. (10s)

Then, when you feel that you are in this moment, you can open your eyes. (10s)

You are now fully alert and awake.

Serene-project, The Southwest Finland Association for Mental Health / Serene-hanke, Lounais-Suomen Mielenterveysseura

www.turunkriisikeskus.fi

toimisto@turunkriisikeskus.fi

