



**Elgin Community College
Wellness Services**

Progressive Muscle Relaxation ~ 3 Minutes

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Angela Ogburn: The capacity to relax is at the foundation of any stress reduction program. In this podcast, follow along with this progressive muscle relaxation exercise to decrease your stress and tension.

Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and relaxing different muscle groups. The idea is to tense each muscle group for about ten seconds, but don't tense so hard that you strain. Then let go of the tension suddenly. This exercise allows you to notice how your muscles feel when relaxed as opposed to how they feel when they're tense.

Let's begin with a couple of deep breaths. Inhale slowly [short pause], then exhale slowly [short pause]. Let's do one more. Inhale slowly [short pause], and exhale slowly [short pause].

Now tense the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as far as you can. Hold this pose [short pause]... and now relax.

Now tense the muscles around your eyes by clenching your eyelids tightly shut. Hold [short pause]... and now relax.

Tighten your jaw by opening your mouth so widely that you stretch the muscles around the hinges of your jaw. Hold [short pause]... and then relax. Let your lips part and allow your jaw to hang loosely.

Tighten your shoulders by raising them up as if you were going to touch your ears with them. Hold [short pause]... and then relax.

Now clench your fists. Hold them together [short pause] ... and now relax. Feel the difference between the tension and the release.

Take a few more deep breaths. Mentally scan your upper body for any residual tension. If a particular area remains tense, repeat one or two of the cycles for that group of muscles.

Now imagine a wave of relaxation slowly spreading throughout your body.

Feel free to use this exercise any time you begin to feel stressed or tense.