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Relaxation Response Exercise II

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

- Practice this exercise for a minimum of 20 minutes a day, preferably at the same time each day so you are able to get into a regular routine, such as on awakening, going to bed or before meal time (preferably not immediately after a meal when you are still digesting your food as food digestion may disrupt deep relaxation states).
- Find a quiet location to practice where you will feel the least distracted. Turn your phone off so you won't have your flow interrupted. "White noise", such as a fan may help to blot on other background noise.
- Assume a comfortable position in which your whole body is supported, including your head (such as in a high back chair or recliner, or lying on the bed or an exercise mat). When lying down, you may wish to support your head and knees by placing pillows underneath; try to do this exercise sitting up if you are particularly sleepy as it preferable to be conscious the whole time).
- When you tense a particular muscle group, do so as vigorously as you can, without straining yourself, for 7-10 seconds, and releasing for 15-20 seconds.
- Concentrate on what is happening so that you can become more aware of where the areas of tension are in your body. You may wish to visualize the muscle group being tensed as you do the physical exercise.
- When you release the muscles, do so quickly, and experience the enjoyment of the sudden feeling of limpness. Remember to allow the relaxation to develop for 15-20 seconds before proceeding to the next muscle group.
- Try to relax all other muscles in your body as far as possible while working on a particular muscle group.
- Tense and relax each muscle group for one repetition; feel free to do several reps in a particularly tense area.
- Begin the progression with three deep abdominal breaths. It is beneficial to combine deep breathing with muscle tensing and relaxing, inhaling while tensing and exhaling while relaxing.
- Use the following sequence:
 - Clenching your fists and then relaxing them.
 - Tightening your biceps (by drawing your forearms towards your shoulders) and then relaxing them.

- Tightening your triceps by extending your arms out straight and locking your elbows, and relaxing them.
- Tensing the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows and then relaxing them (You may wish to imagine your forehead muscles becoming smooth and limp as you relax them).
- Tensing the muscles around your eyes by clenching your eyelids shut and then relaxing them (You may wish to imagine sensations of deep relaxation spreading all around your eye area).
- Tightening your jaw by opening your mouth so widely that you stretch the muscles around the hinges of your jaw, letting your lips part and your jaw hang loose as you relax it.
- Tightening the muscles in the back of your neck by pulling your head way back, as if you were going to touch your head to your back, and then relaxing them (Be gentle in the extension here to avoid injury, particularly if this already a sensitive area for you).
- Take a few deep breaths and become aware of the weight of your head sinking into whatever surface you are resting on.
- Tightening your shoulders by raising them up towards your ears, and then relaxing them.
- Tightening the muscles around your shoulder blades by pushing the shoulder blades back as if you were going to touch them together, and then relaxing them.
- Tightening the muscles of your chest by taking a particularly deep breath and relaxing them (You may wish to imagine any excess tension in your chest flowing away as you exhale).
- Tightening your stomach muscles by sucking your stomach in (You may wish to imagine a wave of relaxation spreading through your abdomen).
- Tightening your lower back by arching it up and relaxing it (You may omit this exercise if you have lower back pain).
- Tightening your buttocks by pulling them together (You may wish to imagine the muscles in your hips going limp and loose).
- Squeezing the muscles in your thighs all the way down to your knees and relaxing them. This generally involves tightening your hips along with your thighs, since the thigh muscles are connected to the pelvis. (You may wish to imagine your thigh muscles smoothing out and relaxing completely).
- Tightening your calf muscles by pulling your toes towards toward you, flexing carefully to avoid cramping, and then releasing them.
- Tightening your feet by curling your toes downwards and relaxing them.
- Mentally scanning your body for any residual tension, and repeating the exercise a few times with that particular muscle group.
- Imagining a wave of relaxation slowly spreading throughout your body, starting at your head and gradually penetrating every muscle group all the way down to your toes.