

Progressive muscle relaxation: introduction

Progressive muscular relaxation, PMR, is a process in which you tense and relax different muscle groups throughout the body, through practising, tensing and relaxing these muscles.

PMR increases your awareness of how it feels for your muscles to be in these two different states of tension and relaxation. In turn, you'll be able to recognise when you have tension in your body and will have practiced letting go of this tension.

PMR is not meant to require great effort. Tense the muscles slowly and gently. If tensing certain muscle groups aggravates your pain, then just practice the relaxed part of the sequence.

You can do this exercise either sitting or lying down.

Begin by closing your eyes and take a few minutes to practice the deep diaphragmatic breathing exercise.

For each muscle group, hold the stretch for a few seconds and then relax for approximately ten seconds, repeating this a couple of times. It can be helpful to say to yourself something like 'relax' or 'let go' as you relax the muscle.