

# MY Heart IN MY Hands

## Stress Management Activity: Progressive Relaxation

### Materials:

- None

### Instructions:

- The Heart Mentor will read the Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script below to her guests
- Ask your guests to get comfortable in a seated or lying down position.
- Read the script to your guests.
- It is recommended that you familiarize yourself with the script before reading it to your guests.

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that relaxes your mind and body by progressively tensing and relaxation muscle groups throughout your entire body. You will tense each muscle group vigorously, but without straining, and then suddenly release the tension and feel the muscle relax. You will tense each muscle for about 5 seconds. If you have any pain or discomfort at any of the targeted muscle groups feel free to omit that step. Throughout this exercise you may visualize the muscles tensing and a wave of relaxation flowing over them as you release that tension. It is important that you keep breathing throughout the exercise. Now let's begin.

Begin by finding a comfortable position either sitting or lying down in a location where you will not be interrupted.

Allow your attention to focus only on your body. If you begin to notice your mind wandering, bring it back to the muscle you are working on.



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Take a deep breath through your abdomen, hold for a few second, and exhale slowly. Again, as you breathe notice your stomach rising and your lungs filling with air.

As you exhale, imagine the tension in your body being released and flowing out of your body. And again inhale.....and exhale.

Feel your body already relaxing.

As you go through each step, remember to keep breathing .

Now let's begin. Tighten the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can.

Hold for about five seconds. And abruptly release feeling that tension fall away.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now smile widely, feeling your mouth and cheeks tense. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, appreciating the softness in your face.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Next, tighten your eye muscles by squinting your eyelids tightly shut. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Gently pull your head back as if to look at the ceiling. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, feeling the tension melting away.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now feel the weight of your relaxed head and neck sink.

Breath in...and out. In...and out.

Let go of all the stress In...and out.

Now, tightly, but without straining, clench your fists and hold this position until I say stop. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now, flex your biceps. Feel that buildup of tension. You may even visualize that muscle tightening.

Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, enjoying that feeling of limpness. Breath in...and out.

Now tighten your triceps by extending your arms out and locking your elbows. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now lift your shoulders up as if they could touch your ears. Hold for about 5 seconds, and quickly release, feeling their heaviness.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Tense your upper back by pulling your shoulders back trying to make your shoulder blades touch. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Tighten your chest by taking a deep breath in, hold for about 5 seconds, and exhale, blowing out all the tension.

Now tighten the muscles in your stomach by sucking in. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Gently arch your lower back. Hold for about 5 seconds, relax.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Feel the limpness in your upper body letting go of the tension and stress, hold for about 5 seconds, and relax.

Tighten your buttocks. Hold for about 5 seconds..., release, imagine your hips falling loose.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Tighten your thighs by pressing your knees together, as if you were holding a penny between them. Hold for about 5 seconds...and release.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now flex your feet, pulling your toes towards you and feeling the tension in your calves. Hold for about 5 seconds, and relax, feel the weight of your legs sinking down.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Curl your toes under tensing your feet. Hold for about 5 seconds, release.

Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now imagine a wave of relaxation slowly spreading through your body beginning at your head and going all the way down to your feet.

Feel the weight of your relaxed body. Breathe in...and out...in...out....in...out.

*\*Used with permission from Dr. Cindy Cook, University of Houston-Clear Lake and adapted from The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook, by Edmund J. Bourne.*