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## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Follow these steps to reach a deep state of relaxation.

1. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Silence your phone.
2. Sit in a chair with your legs stretched out in front of you, heels on the floor. Make any necessary adjustments to get comfortable. Allow your eyes to close.
3. Alternatively tense and then relax the major muscle groups in your body, starting with your feet and working your way up. Create a moderate degree of muscular tension in each area of the body for a few seconds. Then release the tension all at once, really noticing the contrast as you move from tense to relaxed. Continue to relax for 30 to 60 seconds before tensing the next group of muscles.

The sequence can include:

- Lower legs: One leg at a time, pull your toes toward you to create tension along your shin.
- Thighs: One leg at a time, flex your leg, tensing the quadriceps muscle in the front of your thigh.
- Glutes: Squeeze your buttocks muscle.
- Abdomen: Tense your stomach muscles and pull your navel in toward your spine.
- Breath: Take a deep breath in, allowing it to expand your chest, and hold it. Release tension when you exhale.
- Upper arms: One arm at a time, tense the muscles in each upper arm.
- Foreheads and hands: One arm at a time, make a fist and pull your hand backward toward your elbow, creating tensions through your hand, wrist, and forearm.
- Neck and upper back: Shrug your shoulders up toward your ear.
- Face and scalp: Raise your eyebrows while simultaneously scrunching your eyes tightly closed.

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4. Take a few nice, slow breaths as you release any remaining muscle tension, letting your entire body enter a state of deep relaxation.
5. Bring your attention to your breath. Follow the sensations of breathing in and out. With each exhalation, mentally say to yourself a single word that you associate with relaxation (e.g., "peace", "calm", "breathe," etc.) Continue saying this word in your mind each time you exhale, for three-five minutes.
6. Slowly return your awareness to where you are. Begin to wiggle your toes and fingers. When you're ready, open your eyes. Notice how you feel.
7. Practice this sequence at least once per day (ideally twice).
8. Over time you can abbreviate the practice as you get more adept at letting go of tension. You can do both legs or arms at once, for example, and only do the muscle groups where you tend to hold tension.

**Book: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Made Simple By: Seth J. Gillihan PhD**

**Worksheet by: Janay Bailey, LMHC**