

## **PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION**

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Please read these notes prior to commencing the exercises on the accompanying cassette recording.

These are exercises designed to help you to achieve a state of deep relaxation. Often people confuse "relaxation" with "leisure" and "recreation". Many people would say that they achieve relaxation by listening to music, playing sport, gardening, and reading. But it is quite possible to do these things, while remaining physically tense. For our purposes here, "relaxation" refers to the elimination of muscular tension. Reading and gardening etc, may be pleasant past-times but they may not necessarily help to reduce muscular tension. By achieving a state of deep muscular relaxation, you are entering into a new physical state where anxiety and nervous tension will be reduced or eliminated. Practicing and mastering the art of relaxation will significantly reduce the effects of nervous tension such as headaches, insomnia, fatigue and lead to a general improvement in your feelings of well-being.

Most people are tense without even knowing it. Even when we are asleep there is often much residual tension in our bodies. This is often reflected in feeling fatigued after a nights sleep. Eventually when we carry tension in our bodies for long enough, we lose our ability to recognise that our bodies are tense. This can be a particular problem for people who have been subject to considerable personal stress over a long period. The exercises on this recording are designed to help you identify tension and eliminate it thus achieving a new state of deep relaxation. With continued practice you will be able to achieve relaxation quickly and for prolonged periods. This will give you more energy for your everyday activities, improve your concentration and mental alertness.

Like any skill, the true art of relaxation is not mastered overnight. After trying both exercises, pick the one that seems most effective for you. This should then be done every day for at least one to two weeks, before significant and enduring benefits begin to occur. Although you may feel good after one or two exercise sessions, maximum benefit is only obtained with continued practise. Also, do not give up if there is no immediate improvement after one or two sessions.

Although these exercises are extremely safe, do not attempt or continue them if you think you are at any risk of aggravating existing injuries or illnesses. During the Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercise, do not tense your muscles to the point of cramp or pain.

During the exercises you need to be as comfortable as possible. Choose an armchair, or preferably a bed where your body can be completely supported. Use pillows or cushions if necessary to support your arms, knees, head, and neck. If you wear clothes, make sure they are loose. The room should be comfortably warm and where possible, dimly lit or dark. It is also important that you can be confident of remaining uninterrupted during the exercises.

When relaxing, do not try too hard; just let yourself relax as best you can. Also do not try and block out stimulus such as sounds or itches. Feel free to move or scratch. If possible, do not allow yourself to go to sleep until you are deliberately ready to finish the exercises. Going to sleep does not necessarily mean that you have achieved full relaxation.

Now, prepare to enjoy the benefits of deep relaxation!