

What Is Progressive Relaxation?

Notice tension. Practice release. Make room for calm.

This is a guided therapeutic modality.



UNDERSTANDING THE TECHNIQUE

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a structured technique that alternates gentle muscle contraction with release. It helps you distinguish muscular tension from relaxation. A body scan is a related practice: you notice sensations throughout the body without needing to tense your muscles.



HOW IT WORKS

You systematically scan your body, bringing attention to your face, shoulders, arms, torso, legs, and feet. This builds interoceptive awareness—the ability to notice internal bodily sensations. Releasing muscle tension and breathing comfortably can support the relaxation response, including slower breathing and a reduced heart rate.



PRACTICING A NEW RESPONSE

Repeated practice helps you recognize tension earlier and rehearse a calmer response. Think of this as building a familiar pathway toward relaxation. “Positive energy” describes a subjective sense of calm and vitality; it is not a measurable energy pathway in the nervous system.



A GENTLE WAY TO BEGIN

1. Sit comfortably and let your breathing remain easy.
2. Scan slowly from your forehead down to your feet.
3. If comfortable, gently tense one muscle group for about 5 seconds, then release for 10–20 seconds. Keep breathing.
4. Notice the difference. Continue gently, without forcing relaxation.



CARE FOR YOUR COMFORT

Skip injured or painful areas; use noticing and release only. Stop if you feel dizzy, distressed, or uncomfortable. Practice in a safe setting, never while driving. This educational exercise does not replace individualized medical or mental health care.

