

# Appendix G

## Progressive muscle relaxation

Practitioners may wish to use the suggested script below when teaching the veteran the progressive muscle relaxation exercise. It is useful for the practitioner or family member to make an audio recording of the script so that the veteran can practice this relaxation strategy whenever desired or needed.

“Get into a comfortable position, close your eyes, and sit quietly for a few seconds...”

1. Build up the tension in your lower arms by making fists with your hands and pulling up on the wrists. If your nails are long, press your fingers against your palms to make fists. Feel the tension through your lower arms, wrists, fingers, knuckles and hands. Focus on the tension — notice the sensations of pulling, of discomfort, of tightness. Hold the tension for 10 seconds. Now, release the tension and let your hands and lower arms relax onto the chair or bed, with palms facing down. Focus your attention on the sensations of warmth in your hands and arms. Feel the release from tension. Relax the muscles for 20 seconds.
2. Now, build up the tension in your upper arms by pulling the arms back and in toward your sides. Feel the tension in the back of the arms, radiating up into your shoulders and back. Focus on the sensations of tension. Hold the tension for 10 seconds. Now, release the arms and let them relax heavily down. Focus on your upper arms and feel the difference compared to the tension. Your arms feel heavy, warm and relaxed. Relax for 20 seconds.
3. Now, build up the tension in your lower legs by flexing your feet and pointing your toes toward your upper body. Feel the tension in your lower legs. Feel the tension as it spreads through your feet, your ankles, your shins and your calf muscles. Feel the tension spreading down the back of the leg and into the foot, under the foot and around the toes. Focus on that part of your body for 10 seconds. Now, release the leg tension. Let your legs relax heavily onto the chair or the bed. Feel the difference in the muscles as they relax. Feel the release from tension, the sense of comfort, the warmth and heaviness of relaxation (for 20 seconds).
4. Now, build up the tension in your upper legs by pulling your knees together and lifting your legs off the bed or chair. Focus on the tightness through your upper legs. Feel the pulling sensations from your hip down and notice the tension in your legs. Focus on that part of your body for 10 seconds. Now, release the tension, and let your legs drop heavily down onto the chair or bed. Let the tension disappear. Focus on the feeling of relaxation. Feel the difference in your legs. Focus on the feeling of comfort for 20 seconds.
5. Now, build up the tension in your stomach by pulling your stomach in toward the spine, very tight. Feel the tension. Feel the tightness and focus on that part of your body for 10 seconds. Now let the stomach go — let it go further and further. Feel the sense of warmth circulating across your stomach. Feel the comfort of relaxation (20 seconds).
6. Now, build up the tension around your chest by taking in a deep breath and holding it. Your chest is expanded and the muscles are stretched around your chest — feel the tension around your front and your back. Hold your breath (10 seconds). Now, slowly, let the air escape and breathe normally, letting the air flow in and out smoothly and easily. Feel the difference as the muscles relax in comparison to the tension.
7. Moving up to your shoulders, imagine your shoulders are on strings being pulled up toward your ears. Feel the tension around your shoulders, radiating down into your back and up into your neck and the back of your head. Focus on that part of your body. Describe the sensations to yourself. Focus (10 seconds) and then let the shoulders droop down. Let them droop further and further, feeling very relaxed. Feel the sense of relaxation around your neck and shoulders. Focus on the comfort of relaxation (20 seconds).
8. Build up the tension around your neck by pressing the back of your neck toward the chair or bed and pulling your chin down toward your chest. Feel the tightness around the back of the neck spreading up into your head. Focus on the tension (10 seconds). Now release, letting your head rest heavily against the bed or chair. Nothing is holding it up except for the support behind. Focus on the relaxation (20 seconds) and feel the difference from the tension.

9. Build up the tension around your mouth, jaw and throat by clenching your teeth and forcing the corners of your mouth back into a forced smile. Hold the tension (10 seconds). Feel the tightness and describe the sensations to yourself. Now release the tension, letting your mouth drop open and the muscles around the throat and jaw relax. Focus on the difference in the sensations in that part of your body (20 seconds).
10. Now build up the tension around your eyes by squeezing your eyes tightly together for a few seconds and releasing. Let the tension disappear from around your eyes. Feel the difference as the muscles relax.
11. Now build up the tension across the lower forehead by frowning, pulling your eyebrows down and toward the centre. Feel the tension across your forehead and the top of your head. Focus on the tension for 10 seconds and then release, smoothing out the wrinkles and letting your forehead relax. Feel the difference.
12. Finally, build up the tension across the upper forehead by raising your eyebrows up as high as you can. Feel the wrinkling and the pulling sensations across your forehead and the top of your head. Hold the tension (10 seconds) and then relax, letting your eyebrows rest down and the tension leave. Focus on the sensations of relaxation and feel the difference compared to the tension.

Now, your whole body is feeling relaxed and comfortable. As I count from 1 to 5, feel yourself becoming even more relaxed. One, letting all the tension leave your body. Two, sinking further and further into relaxation. Three, feeling more and more relaxed. Four, feeling very relaxed. Five, deeply relaxed. Now, as you spend a few minutes in this relaxed state, think about your breathing. Feel the cool air as you breathe in and the warm air as you breathe out. Your breathing is slow and regular. Every time you breathe out, think to yourself the word, relax... relax...relax..., feeling comfortable and relaxed (2 minutes). Now, as you count backwards from 5 to 1, gradually feel yourself becoming more alert and awake. Five, feeling more awake. Four, coming out of the relaxation. Three, feeling more alert. Two, open your eyes. One, sitting up.”