

Progressive Muscle Relaxation - Tense and Release

Make sure you are in a relaxed position, e.g., sitting upright or lying flat.

Begin the progressive muscle relaxation exercise by closing your eyes if comfortable doing so and then allowing your focus to rest entirely on the sensations of each muscle group as you name them.

Begin at your head or at your feet, and name each muscle group, first tensing them, then holding the tension, then relaxing. Say to yourself something like, "Tense my toes, curl them tight, tight, tight. Now release. Feel the warmth flood into them. Feel the energy and warmth suffuse those muscles. With each exhalation, the warmth flows into the ... (arm, leg, etc.)"

Repeat the tense, hold, release three times for each muscle group.

The order of group could be: scalp, forehead, face, neck (no circles, but let head lean or bend with the weight of the head pulling the head along), shoulders, upper arms, forearm and wrist, fingers, chest, back, buttocks, thighs, shin, calf, ankle and foot.

If going top-down, keep adding the sense of energy flowing down through the relaxed muscles, and end with the awareness of the soles of the feet feeling connected to the earth through the floor.

If going bottom up, end with the energy flowing in with each breath and now coursing down through the body with each exhalation.

This classic visualization - Image of Light - is drawn from yoga techniques:

Imagine that there is above your head a sphere of light/energy.

The light is the color you most associate with (peace, calm, healing, energy, etc.)

As you inhale you draw it into body through breath or through crown chakra.

As you exhale the flow of energy streams through body. The physical experience of warmth and vibrant energy relaxes each part of the body as the breath is exhaled downward from the top of the head through each part of the body, one breath at a time.

It may connect through spine as roots into the earth.

It may connect through soles of feet.

As your body fills with energy, it exudes through every pore, forming an envelope of energy around the body.

Find a word that associates the sensation of total relaxation, such as calm, or even a sound such as 'ah' or 'mmm'.

This energy is impervious to negativity, any experience of which is simply reflected away. And it is completely permeable for all positive experiences, which can be taken in completely.

As the envelope of energy fades through the day it can be renewed with deep breath, imaging light, and saying or hearing the sound you chose.