

## Simple muscle relaxation exercise (Sheila Ross)

When we are stressed we carry tension in our muscles without noticing it. This exercise makes you more aware of the tension that you carry so that you can let it go. As you do this exercise use comfortable stomach breathing as described in the simple breathing exercise.

Sit or lie down and make yourself as comfortable as possible.

1. Breathe in and clench your right hand, notice the tension in your hand and arm,  
*Breathe out, relax your hand and arm, notice the difference.*

2. Breathe in and clench your left hand, notice the tension in your hand and arm,  
*Breathe out, relax your hand and arm, notice the difference*

Notice how comfortably heavy your hands and arms feel when you let them relax.

3. Breathe in and clench your thighs and buttocks, notice the tension in your legs  
*Breathe out, relax your thighs and buttocks, notice the difference*

4. Breathe in and bend your feet up, notice the tension in your feet and lower legs  
*Breathe out, relax your feet and lower legs, notice the difference*

5. Breathe in and point your toes, notice the tension in your legs and feet  
*Breathe out, relax your legs and feet, notice the difference*

Allow the relaxation to deepen. Notice the pleasurable sensation of heaviness in your legs and arms as you allow them to relax.

6. Breathe in and 'shrug' your shoulders to your ears, notice the tension in your shoulders and neck  
*Breathe out, relax your shoulders and neck, notice the difference*

7. Breathe in and lift your eyebrows, wrinkling your brow, notice the tension in your forehead  
*Breathe out, relax, smoothing out your eyebrows and forehead, notice the difference*

8. Breathe in and squeeze your eyes tightly closed, notice the tension in all your eye muscles  
*Breathe out, relax your eyes, notice the difference*

9. Breathe in and tense your jaw, notice the tension in your mouth and jaw  
*Breathe out, relax jaw and mouth, notice the difference*

Notice how comfortable your whole face feels as you allow it to relax.

10. Continue to relax, breathing calmly, using comfortable stomach breathing.

Practise regularly to make it easier to let go of tensions when under pressure.