

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation, or PMR, is another type of active relaxation exercise that can be helpful, especially in moments when you feel stressed or angry. During this relaxation, we will focus on 4 muscle groups, purposefully tensing the muscle, and then releasing and relaxing the muscle. PMR is helpful for two reasons:

1. The active process of tensing the muscle creates a momentum when we release the tension (like a pendulum). For the state of tension we are in, we create an equal state of relaxation, therefore achieving a more relaxed state than we would if we shifted from a resting state to a relaxed state.
2. By creating tension and following it with relaxation, we increase our awareness of the contrast between these two states. Highlighting this difference makes us more aware of when we are tense, so we are more likely to recognize when we are holding tension throughout the day and be aware of a method for quickly letting go of that tension.

## The four muscle groups are:

**Hands, forearms, and biceps:**  
hold arms at 45-degree angle  
and make fists

**Face and neck:** raise  
eyebrows, squint eyes, wrinkle  
nose, bite down lightly, pull  
back corners of mouth, and pull  
head slightly down to chin

**Chest, shoulders, upper back,  
abdomen:** take a deep breath,  
hold it in, pull back the  
shoulders

**Thighs, calves, feet:** Lift your  
feet off the floor, flex slightly,  
and turn toes inward

## Tips

- Get in a comfortable position, lying or sitting.
- The goal is to tense, but not so hard that you cause pain or cramping.
- When you relax, immediately relax your muscles, instead of slowly letting go
- Like the other active relaxation exercises, this takes practice. The more you practice, the easier it will become to relax.