

DEEP
BREATHING
AND
PROGRESSIVE
MUSCLE
RELAXATION



BENEFITS

The purpose of these exercises is to help your mind focus on the here and now and be mindful of your current state.

Deep Breathing

- Activates the body's natural relaxation response
- Lowers heart rate and blood pressure
- Decreases stress level

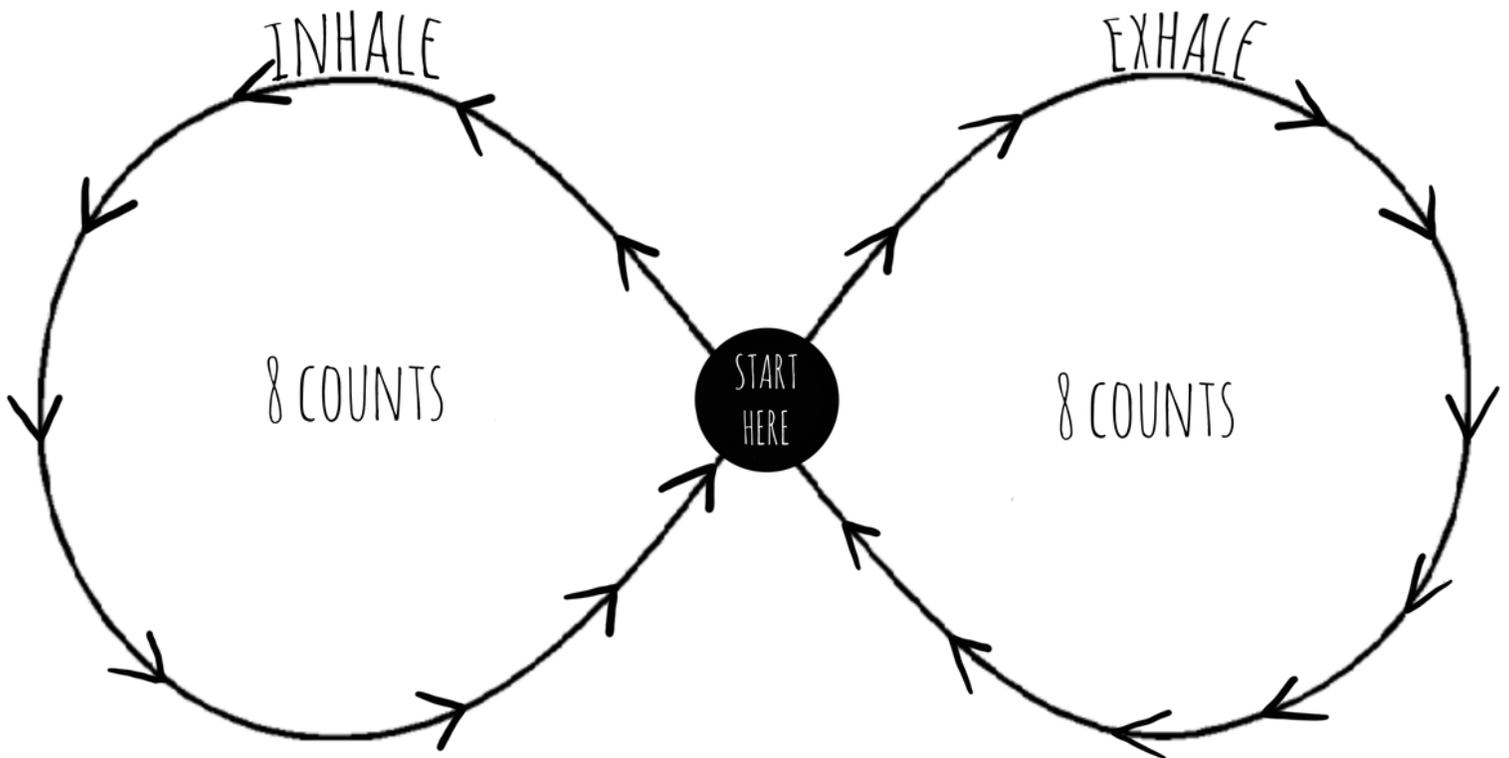
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Redirects the mind to the here-and-now
- Heightens awareness sensations in the body
- Helps the mind stay grounded

It is not recommended to practice progressive muscle relaxation if you have a history of muscle spasms, back problems, or other injuries that can be aggravated by tensing muscles. Please consult with your doctor first before engaging in the practice if this is a concern for you.

DEEP BREATHING

Sit comfortably in your chair with your back straight and your legs flat on the floor. This will ensure that you are able to take a deep enough breath. Place one hand on your belly and follow the figure-8 with your finger. Try to breathe with your belly, not your chest.



Repeat until you feel calm and ready to continue to muscle relaxation.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Remember to maintain your deep breathing throughout the exercise.

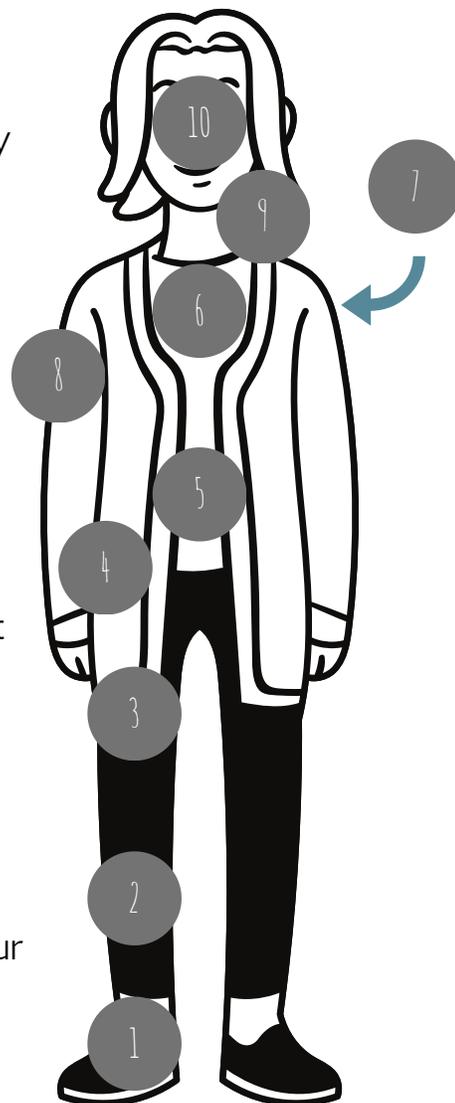
Turn your attention to your right foot. Focus on the way it feels for a moment.

Slowly tense the muscles and squeeze as tightly as you can for 10 seconds. Relax.

How does it feel when the tension leaves your foot?
How does it feel now that it is loose and limp?

Remain in this relaxed state for a few moments. Breathe deeply and slowly.

Continue this pattern up your body: notice, tense, relax, reflect.



- 1 Right, then left foot
- 2 Right, then left calf
- 3 Right, then left thigh
- 4 Hips and buttocks
- 5 Stomach
- 6 Chest
- 7 Back
- 8 Right, then left arm and hand
- 9 Neck and shoulders
- 10 Face

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation redirects the mind to the here-and-now, heightens awareness sensations in the body, and helps the mind stay grounded.
- It is not recommended to practice progressive muscle relaxation if you have a history of muscle spasms, back problems, or other injuries that can be aggravated by tensing muscles. Please consult with your doctor first before engaging in the practice if this is a concern for you.
- Remember to maintain your deep breathing throughout the exercise.

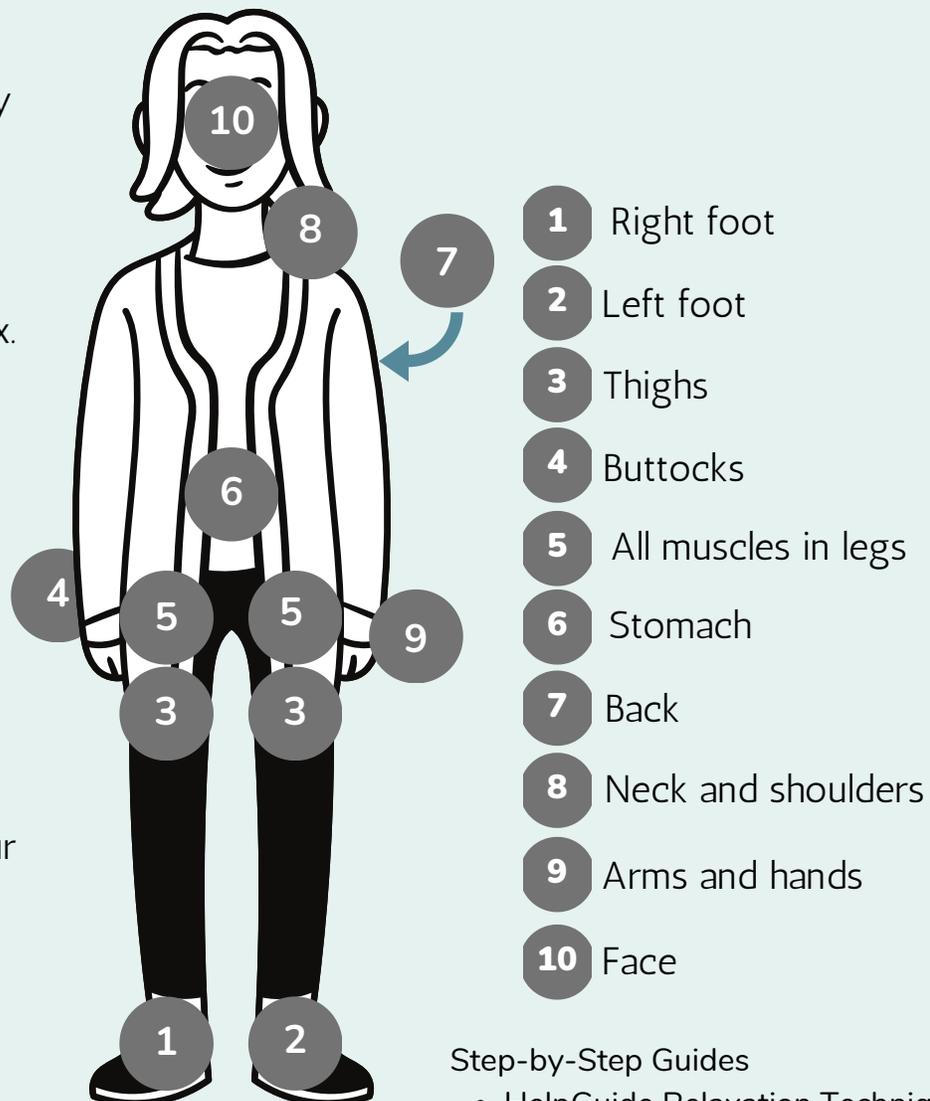
Turn your attention to your right foot. Focus on the way it feels for a moment.

Slowly tense the muscles and squeeze as tightly as you can for 5 seconds. Relax.

How does it feel when the tension leaves your foot?
How does it feel now that it is loose and limp?

Remain in this relaxed state for a few moments. Breathe deeply and slowly.

Continue this pattern up your body with each muscle group: notice, tense, relax, reflect.



Step-by-Step Guides

- HelpGuide Relaxation Techniques for Stress Relief found at [helpguide.org](https://www.helpguide.org)



DO IT AT HOME

Implement these practices in your room or on the go by using the following resources:

Apps and Videos

- Breathe2Relax app for iOS and Android – Free
- Meditation apps, such as Calm or HeadSpace, for iOS and Android – Free with in-app purchases
- Autogenic Training Progressive Muscle Relaxation for iOS – \$2.99
- Paced Breathing for Android – Free with in-app purchases
- Breathe app for Apple Watch – Free
- BreatheWell Wear for Android Wear – Free

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It doesn't have to be difficult to add these practices to your day-to-day life; even a minute can make a difference! You can use the apps and videos above for a guided exercise or do it yourself by setting a timer and focusing on your breath and muscles.