# Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Kids

Ongoing stress can lead to muscle tension in the body often causing discomfort and anxiety. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is the simple practice of tensing or tightening one muscle group at a time, followed by relaxation to release tight areas in the body.

**Set-up**: Turn down the lights and play soft, calming music, ocean sounds, or no music at all

**Time**: 10-15 Minutes

**Ages**: 8 and up

**Skills**: Body Awareness, Release Tension, Calm, Relaxation

## Directions:

Working from head to toe, participants will "check-in" and notice the sensations occurring in each body part and mindfully tighten and soften to draw awareness to the sensation of being tense (tight) or relaxed (soft). This is a great way to use the body to alleviate stress and anxiety.

## Script:

Lay on your back and settle into a comfortable position where you feel safe and supported. If you are comfortable, close your eyes (or place a BE Buddy® or eye pillow over your eyes) and let your face relax. Allow your whole body to fall heavy and soft. Breathe naturally and begin to pay attention to the rhythm of your breath. Feel your belly rise on the inhale and fall gently on the exhale. Allow your body to relax a little more with each exhale.

The first step is to tense each muscle group and hold for 5 seconds. Then, exhale as you let your muscles fully relax for 10 to 20 seconds before you move on to the next muscle group.

Imagine that you are at the beach and settle in to rest on the warm beach sand. Breathe in the scent of the fresh air and notice the sounds that surround you as you let your body find stillness and comfort. Listen to the rhythm of your breath like the waves in the ocean.

***Now, bring your attention to your…***

**FEET** and notice how they are feeling right now. Squeeze your feet and make them tight by curling your toes…like you're digging them into the warm sand. Squeeze tightly for 5-4-3-2-1. Take a big inhale and exhale. Let your feet fall heavy and relaxed. Enjoy this calm feeling.

**LEGS** and tighten your legs by curling your toes up towards your head…as if a big cool wave just washed over them. Squeeze your leg muscles tighter…tighter… for 5-4-3-2-1. Inhale and exhale as you relax your legs. Feel your legs get heavy and soft.

**STOMACH** and inhale as you feel your belly rise and as you exhale, tighten your stomach muscles really tight as if a big dog were about to jump on your belly. Keep squeezing your belly in tight. Hold here for 5-4-3-2-1. Inhale, and exhale letting your stomach muscles relax. Notice how it feels to let go.

**HANDS** and squeeze them into tight fists like you are pressing the juice out of an orange. Squeeze them hard to get all of the juice out. Feel the tightness in your hands and arms as you squeeze for 5-4-3-2-1. Now drop the orange and relax, letting your hands and arms lay floppy at your sides. Notice the difference between being tight and soft.

**SHOULDERS** and pretend that you are a turtle sitting out on a rock in the water just relaxing in the warm sun. Oh-oh! Here comes a big wave! Pull your head into your house by shrugging your shoulders up to your ears. Hold it tightly for 5-4-3-2-1. The danger is past now. Take a big inhale, relax your shoulders away from your ears and enjoy the warm sunshine on your body.

**HEAD AND FACE**, and now tighten the muscles in your face by squeezing your eyes shut and clenching your lips together as if you just tasted something sour. Hold it tight for 5-4-3-2-1. Inhale and exhale, relaxing all the muscles in your face. Feel your face soften. Notice the feeling of relaxation.

**MOUTH** and pretend that you are trying to eat a giant, hard carrot. It is tough to chew. Bite down on it as hard as you can. We want to turn the carrot into mush. Keep biting for 5-4-3-2-1. Good. Inhale and exhale all the air out. Relax your jaw, letting it hang loose and soft. Allow your tongue to soften away from the roof of the mouth to rest. Feel the warm sunshine on your body from head to toe. Focus on how the most relaxed areas of your body feel now.

Enjoy this time allowing your body to rest and be still.

When you are ready, stretch your muscles to let your body wake up. You can begin by wiggling your toes and fingers. Turn your head from side to side to wake your neck and shoulders. Pull your knees up to your chest and give them a quick hug before you roll over to one side and make your way up to a comfortable seat and open your eyes.

## Reflect:

*How did it feel when you tensed your muscles?*

*Where did you feel the tension in your body?*

*Could you feel the difference between feeling tense and feeling relaxed?*

*When is a good time to practice relaxation?*