

REACTION REDUCTION TECHNIQUES 1



Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):

Whether you have been involved in a Critical Incident, a Potentially Traumatic Event, or you just want to feel more calm or relaxed, PMR is a great way to reduce your physiological, emotional and psychological distress. Use this regularly as the more you practise it the more effective it becomes. Try this when you can't sleep, can't concentrate or just want to reduce your stress reactions.

Below are some elements that make up the progressive muscle relaxation exercise. Each of these are relaxation strategies in their own right. However, when we put them all together and include them in the process of PMR, you can achieve a much greater benefit.

Controlled Breathing



Breathing is one area of our physiology that we have control over. Breathing is strongly linked to stress response, and so if we focus on controlling our breathing, we can help to manage the body's stress reactions.

- Find a comfortable position sitting or lying.
- Close your eyes and notice your breath coming into and out of your body.
- When breathing, inhale for 4-5 seconds, hold for 3 seconds, exhale for 5-6 seconds

Self Talk



What we say to ourselves in our own minds has a significant impact on our physiology and emotion. Being able to control your internal dialogue gives you a better chance of controlling your emotion. In this task, our internal dialogue will help us feel relaxed.

- When inhaling, say "in" to yourself in your own mind for the entire breath in.
- When exhaling, say "relax" in your own mind for the entire breath out.

Visualisation



What we think and see in our own minds has a significant impact on our physiology and emotion. Being able to control your mental imagery gives you a better chance of controlling your emotion and therefore managing your reactions.

- When holding your breath for the 3 seconds, scan your body for tension, aches, pains, tightness etc and focus on that point.
- When exhaling, imagine that tension leaving that particular focus spot and exiting your body with your breath. You are breathing it out of your body.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Include the elements above to ensure your progressive muscle relaxation exercise is most effective.

- While you are holding your breath for 3 seconds, tense each of the muscles in the order listed below
- As in step 3, focus your attention on that particular muscle group
- Only tense your muscles moderately (not to the point of pain, breathing the tension out with each breath
- Start with the feet, and progressively work up through each of the muscle groups.
- Feet → Calves → Thighs → Buttocks → Lower back → Upper back → Stomach → Chest → Hands → Lower arms → Upper arms → Shoulders → Neck → Forehead and scalp → Eyes → Jaw → Tongue
- Sit/lay still for a few moments enjoying the feeling of relaxation If you are not already asleep.

Practice equals progress. By using these techniques, you will be more aware of the process of how your body responds. You will have a better appreciation of the physical signs of stress and tension and be able to train your body to respond differently. Practice these skills consistently to make the process of become relaxed faster and more effective.