SLEEP & RELAXATION

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

Written for clinicians, therapists and teachers who need a script to read aloud. Twelve minutes, word for word, with tension and release timed through every major muscle group and a safety caveat built into the opening. Read it to a client, use it with a group, or record it as an episode.

12 min · 6 segments

Twelve minutes, six segments. Read it straight through — the notes in brackets are for you, not the listener.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Every tense instruction needs a real five-count before the release. Read it at speed and you produce something nobody can follow along with.
- Say the release word — 'and let go' — on a falling tone, every single time. It becomes the cue the listener's body learns to anticipate.
- The safety line in segment one is not optional padding. People with injuries will follow you literally.
- Your voice should drop and slow across the whole recording, then come back up in the final segment. Ending soft leaves people stranded.
- Read the invitation as an option. Try “If it feels comfortable, gently tense your hands, then let them rest. You can also keep them still.” Record the cue with a quiet interval afterward. Listen for enough time to choose either option before the next instruction.

01. Welcome and settle

1 min 30

[warm and ordinary — you are explaining a mechanism, not performing calm]

Hello, and welcome. Over the next twelve minutes we're going to work through the body in sections — tensing each part deliberately, then letting it go.

There's a reason it's done this way round. A muscle that has just been squeezed hard releases further than one you simply asked to relax. You're not fighting the tension. You're using it.

One thing before we start. Tense firmly, but never to the point of pain or cramping. If any part of you is injured or sore, skip that section entirely and just breathe through it. Nothing here is worth hurting yourself for. *[pause for 5 seconds — let that land]*

Lie down if you can. A bed or a mat is ideal. A chair works if you let your feet go flat on the floor and your hands rest in your lap. Let your eyes close. *[pause for 8 seconds — give them time to actually get settled]*

Take one slow breath in through the nose. And let it go through the mouth. We'll begin at the feet and work upward.

02. Feet and legs

2 min 30

[count the five aloud, evenly — this is the segment where the listener learns the rhythm]

Start with your feet. Curl your toes downward, hard, as if you were gripping the floor with them. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

Notice the difference. Not the absence of tension — the warmth that comes in behind it. That's the thing we're after, and it will get easier to feel as we go up the body.

Now your calves. Point your toes up toward your knees, so you feel the stretch along the back of the lower leg. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

Your thighs. Press the backs of your legs down into whatever is holding you, and tighten the big muscles at the front. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. *[pause for 12 seconds]*

Both legs are done. Let them get heavy. Let them be someone else's problem for the next ten minutes. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

03. Stomach, back and hands

2 min 30

[keep the same five-count exactly — consistency is what makes this work]

Move up to your stomach. Draw the muscles in, as though you were bracing for something. Not holding your breath — just tightening. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

Now the back. Arch it very slightly, just enough to lift a little away from the surface underneath you. Gently — this is the one people overdo. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. *[pause for 12 seconds]*

Your hands. Make a fist on both sides, tight, thumbs on the outside. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. Let the fingers fall open however they want to. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

And your arms. Bend at the elbow and tighten the whole arm, wrist to shoulder. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. Let them drop. *[pause for 12 seconds]*

04. Shoulders, neck and face

2 min 30

[slower here — the face is where most people are carrying it and they rarely know]

Your shoulders. Lift them up toward your ears, as high as they'll go. Higher than feels sensible. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let them drop. *[pause for 12 seconds]*

That one usually makes a difference people can feel straight away. Shoulders carry a great deal without ever being asked.

Now your jaw. Bite down gently — gently — and press your tongue to the roof of your mouth. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. Let the jaw hang slightly open. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

Your eyes and forehead. Squeeze your eyes shut and lift your eyebrows at the same time, so the whole face screws up. Hold — two, three, four, five — and let go. *[pause for 12 seconds]*

Let the forehead be smooth. Let the space between your eyebrows be wide.

05. The whole body at once

2 min

[this is the peak of the recording — commit to the silence afterwards]

One more. This time everything together. On my count — feet, legs, stomach, hands, arms, shoulders, face. All of it.

Ready. Tense — two, three, four, five — and let it all go. *[long pause — 30 seconds of silence, do not fill it]*

Stay there. Nothing to hold. Nothing to do. Let your breathing carry on without you supervising it. *[long pause — 45 seconds]*

If your mind has wandered somewhere in the last few minutes, that's fine. The body did the work regardless. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

06. Coming back

1 min

[normal speaking voice by the last two lines — this is you walking them out of the room]

We're going to finish. Start to bring some movement back into your hands and feet. Small movements. Fingers, toes. *[pause for 8 seconds, then lift the voice]*

Roll your shoulders once. Turn your head slowly to one side, and back.

And when you're ready — no hurry — let your eyes open.

If you're doing this before sleep, stop here and stay where you are. If you've got a day to get on with, sit up slowly and give yourself a moment before you stand. Thank you for practising with me.

USAGE

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