

Self-care Toolkit

Progressive relaxation

This worksheet is designed to assist you in developing your personal skills to better manage your current situation.

If you are having trouble understanding this worksheet or need support, please call a MensLine Australia counsellor on 1300 78 99 78.

Things to think about

When we are hurt or troubled, we want to be soothed. While it is good to lean on others, we can also learn fresh ways to soothe ourselves. Deliberately relaxing is one good way to feel better. Relaxation is a skill anyone can learn.

When starting with the exercise below, go easy on yourself. It is often hard to calm down, especially when we are/have been angry. It's not always easy to fully relax the first time. However, with practice and determination, it can have a good effect. Try the exercise below when you are feeling okay and then wheel it out when you are angry.

Activity

When attempting this relaxation technique, read it a couple of times before starting. If you forget any step, you can always stop the exercise, re-read it and then start again.

- Find a quiet, comfortable place, close your eyes and begin by thinking or imagining yourself somewhere you like to be, doing something you like to do, say a place in nature such as the bush, beach, mountains, or snow.
- Clench a part of your body, say your jaw, and then tell it to relax.
- Next, tighten your shoulders and then relax, let the shoulders kind of melt.
- Now tighten your stomach muscles – keep breathing all through this. Don't hold your breath ...and let go ... relax.
- As you tighten each part of your body, you might like to count with your breathing. For instance: tense your toes and breathe in 1 ... 2 ... 3 ... and release and relax your toes while breathing out 1 ... 2 ... 3 ...
- As you get better at this process, you can learn to relax the whole body at once. Remember every part of you: fingers and toes, back, elbows, heart and internal organs, face, etc. Some people like to start at the head, others the toes. Some people like to begin by relaxing the tense muscles first. Find what works for you.
- Relaxation is a good technique to use if you cannot sleep.

This worksheet is part of a series on anger management, communication and self-care. You may find it useful to complete other worksheets in this series. For more information or assistance, call MensLine Australia on 1300 78 99 78