

# Yarra Valley Body Balms

## Progressive Muscle Relation (PMR) Exercise

If you usually, or from time to time feel anxious and tense, this may be an option for you. Are your neck and shoulders usually problematic and do you experience significant neck and upper back pain, and discomfort? This may be where your stress lands.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercise (PMR) is useful to treat stressed areas of your body.

Strictly speaking, this is not a breathing exercise. PMR has similarities to Relaxation Response exercises in that, its focus is on **muscle relaxation** combined with deep breathing techniques.

This is how you do it: -

- Tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tightly contracted as you can comfortably manage – eg: be seated and choose your upper leg muscles.
- Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds, then relax the muscles to their previous state.
- Next, attempt to consciously relax the muscles even further.

The aim behind this exercise is to relax your muscles even more than they were, in their previous state.

By tensing your muscles first, you may find that you are then able to relax your muscles even more than if you tried to relax them, from their original state.

Try experimenting with PMR by clenching a hand into a fist as tight as you can for a few seconds. Then, relax this hand to its previous tension, and then consciously relax even further so that it is now as loose as possible.

I then recommend a relaxation sequence for muscles around your body, as follows: -

1. Right foot\* (start with your left foot if you are left-handed)
2. Left foot
3. Right calf
4. Left calf
5. Right thigh
6. Left thigh
7. Hips and buttocks
8. Stomach
9. Chest
10. Back
11. Right arm and hand
12. Left arm and hand
13. Neck and shoulders
14. Face

If you are following these instructions for the first time, you may be surprised with the results. Clients have expressed that they have felt relaxed and 'at ease' in the immediate hours following use of this exercise; so much so that some of them have decided to use PMR on a regular basis.