



RELAX WITH BREATHING

BY KATIE ALSIN

Our last newsletter taught us how to do diaphragmatic breathing. Let's continue this theme by learning how to further relax, decrease stress, and improve sleep with Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR). If any of your current New Year's resolutions have to do with improved health and wellness, then this is the newsletter for you.

So what is Progressive Muscular Relaxation?

PMR is a relaxation technique that involves sequential contraction of a muscle group followed by immediate relaxation, with intentional breathing before moving onto the next. When combined with diaphragmatic breathing learned from the last newsletter, you've got some instant relaxation.

Let's break this down:

In PMR you are contracting a muscle group or region enough to create tension, but not enough to the extent of discomfort or cramping. You hold this contraction for about 5-10 seconds. Then, it is followed by an immediate relaxation of that region and approximately 15-30 seconds of diaphragmatic or intentional breathing.

You can do this on just a few muscle groups - or if you're looking to improve sleep, start from your head and work your way down to your toes.

Give these a try:

Face - Contracting the face muscles such as the lips, eyebrows, and nose.

Hands - Clenching your hands into tight fists.

Core - Tightening the abdominal muscles without lifting back off of the floor.

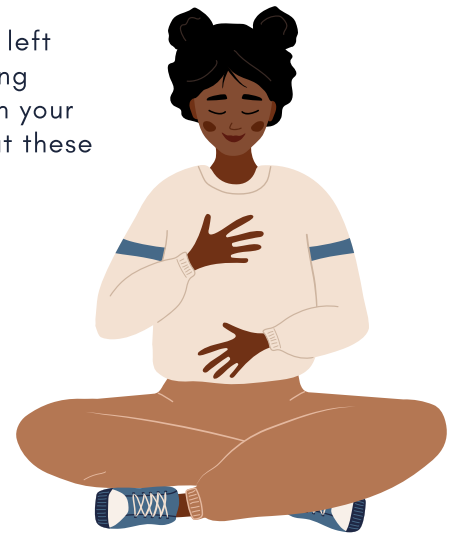
Feet/toes - Curling your toes and pointing your feet.

Repeat as desired! Try this before a task or to help you relax before you fall asleep.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Review:

Lay down on your back on a flat surface with knees bent or in a comfortable upright seated position. Place your left hand on your chest and right hand on your belly button. Inhaling through your nose, try to push your right hand toward the sky by expanding your belly. Picture your diaphragm pressing towards your hips and your lungs inflating.

Slowly exhale through your mouth (as if you were blowing into a balloon) and feel your right-hand lower towards the floor or into your chest. Your left hand should be moving significantly less than your right hand throughout these breaths.



About Katie Alsin, LAT, ATC

Katie is a certified Athletic Trainer out of the greater Seattle, WA area. Whether it's during an appointment with a team member or out visiting a workstation, she loves patient education and teaching her team members about recovery tips and tricks. When she's not at work, you can usually find her chasing down a sunset or whipping up a new recipe in the kitchen!

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