

## **Muscular relaxation – Body scan**

*The following muscular relaxation technique is available in audio version on our podcast (episode 6) and also on our YouTube channel (video 4 part 1). As with the audio and video versions, the following text instructions will take you through the different regions of your body in turn, focusing on tensing and then relaxing the muscles.*

*By first increasing the tension, you will then find you are able to release the muscles further. If you are tense, you might be doing some of the following things:*

- *Frowning, clenching your jaw and grinding your teeth, raising or hunching your shoulders, clenching your hands or tightly crossing your legs.*
- *You may have developed a drawn in and closed posture and a shallow or held breathing pattern, which may exacerbate shallow breathing that you already due to your illness.*

*To relieve stress, we need to learn to relax our muscles, which can be easier said than done. It can take practise, and you may need to do it throughout the day to prevent the tension from building back up.*

*This technique is a nice and simple one which you can practise anywhere, so long as you feel comfortable and able to focus, and are not feeling too self-conscious.*

*If you practise these exercises every day you will find that they reduce your overall level of tension. There may be groups of muscles that feel particularly tense, often the shoulders or jaw muscles. Make sure they feel properly relaxed by the time you have finished. If you need to follow the process more than three times to achieve this, then do.*

*Find a quiet warm place where you won't be disturbed. Choose a time of day when you do not feel pressured to do anything else. Lie down on your back, or sit in a comfortable and supportive chair. If you feel comfortable to do so, gently close your eyes. For each group of muscles, tense as much as you can, then relax the muscles fully. Each time you relax a group of muscles, notice how they feel when relaxed compared to when they are tense. Breathe in when you tense the muscles and breathe out when you relax. Repeat the whole sequence three times.*

*To start with, we would like you to concentrate on your breathing for a few minutes. Remember the breathing control technique from the previous episodes.*

*Each breath in is relaxed and gentle, with the air wafting in softly through your nostrils. Each breath out is a soft blow, as if trying to get the flame of a candle in front of you to flicker. Breathe slowly and calmly.*

*First go through the breathing control technique and do three minutes of relaxed, controlled breathing. After the first minute, say some words to yourself which provide reassurance and promote relaxation, such as 'peace', 'relax', 'you are in control'.*

*Now you are going to work your way through each of the body's muscle groups, tensing and then relaxing them...*

## **MUSCULAR RELAXATION SEQUENCE**

- 1. Clench one hand tightly for a few seconds as you breathe in. You should feel your forearm muscles tense; then relax as you breathe out. Repeat with the other hand.*
- 2. Bend an elbow and tense all the muscles in the arm for a few seconds as you breathe in; then relax as you breathe out. Repeat the same with the other arm.*
- 3. Raise your shoulders as high as you can as you breathe in; then relax as you breathe out.*
- 4. Press your head back as hard as is comfortable and roll it slowly from side to side; then relax.*
- 5. Try to frown and lower your eyebrows as hard as you can for a few seconds; then relax. Then raise your eyebrows (as if you were startled) as hard as you can; then relax. Then clench your jaw for a few seconds; then relax.*
- 6. Take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds; then relax and go back to normal breathing.*
- 7. Tense the stomach muscles as tightly as possible; then relax.*
- 8. Squeeze the buttocks together as much as possible; then relax.*
- 9. With your legs flat on the floor, bend your feet and toes towards your face as hard as you can; then relax. Then bend them away from your face for a few seconds; then relax.*

*Return to the start of the muscular relaxation sequence, and repeat the process at least two more times through.*