

Dr. Edmund Jacobson:

Progressive muscle relaxation

How to reduce the physical feeling of induced worries (anxiety) by using relaxation?

Every time, when you feel anxious or you are stressed, your muscles tighten up. When muscles tighten up too much, you can have not comfortable and unpleasant feelings, such as headache, pain in your neck, shoulders and back, in the chest, the trouble with breathing, tremor, numbness in hands and in face. Because of these feelings the anxiety increases, that again causes tension in the muscles. The result is a vicious circle of increasing tension, which is more unpleasant.

The most effective way how to control the physical feelings of induced anxiety is a relaxation. Relaxation does not mean just sitting before TV screen or spend time on your hobbies (even though these recreation activities are also important). You need to learn how to reduce the excessively tension in your body, whenever you want or need it. Then you can use this knowledge to reduce the feeling of anxiety and many connected with it unpleasant body feelings in different situations. Moreover, if your body is free from tension, your mind will also calm down.

Certainly, the ability to relax is not natural ability, it is a skill that is required to learn. The following exercise would help you to learn, how to achieve a goal - relaxing condition. The first of the exercises is long enough, but if we can manage it, you will make the process of relaxation shorter and it can take less time. Of course, you need to spend time for it and do not hurry up.

General recommendation

- Before you do exercise, you need to decide, when or what time you will do exercise and try to follow it every day to make the exercise become part of your daily routine.
- Do exercise two or three times a day, the often you will exercise, the easier you will be able to reach relaxation condition.
- Choose a quiet place, where nobody will disturb you. Do not allow to do exercises if you're hungry or have heaviness after a meal. It is also not good, if it is too hot in the room or too cold. It could defend you to reach relaxation condition.
- Before doing exercise lie on the floor in comfortable clothes. Later you can exercise in standing or sitting position.
- Try to take a passive stance. Do not worry about how it goes and whether you can relax successfully. Do not get busy and feel free.
- Try to breathe through your nose and completely fill your lungs, so you feel you stretch the abdominal muscles.
- Breathe slowly and regularly; do not breath suddenly, quickly and deeply, because it can cause dizziness. Put your hand on stomach, and if you breathe properly, you will feel as you hand raises. Try to breath well before practicing relaxation, so, you will get it.
- Record after each exercise, how much you could relax to let you know, how it goes. Expect, that sometimes it can be worse, sometimes better. Each of us has days when it goes better or worse.

Exercise

Progressive relaxation

Because you cannot read instructions and do exercise at the same time, please, read it to know their content. Then you can do all 4 exercises, that is shorter. Then you will be able to reach relaxation phase during the first exercise, go to the second one, then to the third, and to the fourth exercise, called quick relaxation. The whole practice can take you several weeks. The required time for each of us is different. Go to the another exercise only when you have learned how to relax. You cannot achieve anything by hurrying up.

The progressive muscle relaxation

The practice in progressive relaxation can help you to distinguish the difference between tension muscles and muscles in relaxation. Also you can feel, when you have them in tension and start to relax. Gradually go through particular kinds of muscles, which we have to tight and release. For later practice it is better not to lie, but sit on the comfortable chair. It is very important to exercise to relax anxiety in right turn and in right rhythm. The anxiety must to come when we intake of breath, the relaxation must to come with the breathing out. At first, tighten slowly the appropriate muscles and at the same time concentrate on feeling of anxiety and effort. Keep your muscles tighten about 5 second, then relax during 10- 15 seconds. Mention, what do you feel having relaxed muscles. Give attention on the appropriate parts of your body. This relaxation exercise consists in that you tighten and relax gradually all main groups of muscles in your body. Normally tighten and relax every kind of muscles only once. After passing we evaluate 0- 100 % level, which level of relaxation we get reached. We use this level border every time to follow our progress.

Instructions for progressive relaxation

- Grit your both fists so strong, that you feel anxious in fists,in forearm, relax.
- Bend elbows and clench biceps, relax the hands, relax.
- Stretch the both arms and clench triceps, relax.
- Pull the shoulders to the ears . . . relax.
- Pucker body and raise the eyebrows . . . relax.
- Pinch cap . . . relax.
- Tension jaws that clamp tight lipped . . . relax. .
- Push the tongue against the palate, the lips are together, notice the tension in the throat . . . Relax.
- Tilt your head back as far as it goes . . . relax.
- Press the chin against the chest . . . relax. .
- Lift the shoulders to the ears . . . relax.
- Take a deep breath, completely fill the lungs, hold your breath, exhale and relax.
- Pull shoulder blades together . . . relax.
- Clench stomach muscles . . . relax.
- Clench buttocks . . . relax.
- Fill thighs . . . relax.
- Push the feet into the floor . . . relax.
- Lift the toes and push up . . . relax.
- Breathe calm and regularly by stomach . . . Make seven breaths and with each exhale let your body fade like a rag doll, we say to ourselves the word "Relax".

From beginning it is suitable to choose time and place,that suits us very well and nobody can disturb us. We need to exercise at least 10 minutes twice every day during 2 weeks. During whole practice we keep breathing slowly and regularly. If you feel anxious at the end of exercise, you need to repeat exercise. If you feel anxious only in separate parts of body, do exercise only concentrating on these muscles. After finishing of exercise wait a little and wait for calming of your mind. Think about something pleasant-imagine scene that is most suitable for you. Breath through nose slowly. Spend 1 or 2 minutes to calm, then open your eyes. Do not stand up quickly and after you are ready, move **slowly** and stretch **gently**.

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