

Progeessive Muscle



Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Identify Problem: To teach one stress coping skill, which students may practice and use by themselves, to help relax and deal with stress.

Activity: Explain that tensed muscles and chronic stress can lead to a lot of physical problems, such as ulcers, back aches, neck aches, headaches, increased susceptibility to allergies and viruses, etc. When we are under stress, we often don't realize our muscles are tense. As an example, have the students make a fist with their right hand as tight as they can, while you continue talking. Explain that many of our muscles tighten during a stressful encounter. We ignore them, as they remained tightened, until we forget about them and the tightened state begins to feel normal. Have the students think about the last movie they saw (make sure they are still tensing their fist). Give them a minute to recall the plot and who played the main characters. Now remind them that their fist is still tensed. Chances are they forgot for the moment about the fist. Sometimes when we try to relax we can't because we can not readily tell the difference between tension and relaxation in the various muscle groups. By now their fist should be tired of tensing. Have them note, the fingers are white due to lack of blood flow, and the forearm is probably tired and shows other signs of fatigue. Now have them lay their fist, fingers up, on their lap and release the tension, open the fist and let go. Ask for observations about how their hand feels now. The blood rushes in, the hand feels warm, sort of dead, tired, etc. This is relaxation. Now your hand, this one muscle group can tell the difference between tension and relaxation.

Precede with any muscle relaxation techniques of your choosing.

*For example, the Body and Soul Meditation CD #3.

- How do you feel when you are relaxed?
- Why is it important to have some down time?
- Is all stress bad?
- How can you decide if you have healthy levels of stress?
- What are some other ways that you can manage stress?
- Are there ways that you could manage stress quickly if you did not have time to do a full muscle relaxation?
- Ask any other questions that apply.

Identify Skills: Learning to relax
Recognizing stress
Coping with stress
Meditation
Healthy stress
Importance of relaxation time

Source: Teresa Willie