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Body Awareness

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Muscle tension is commonly associated with stress, anxiety and fear as part of a process which helps the body prepare for potentially dangerous situations. This reaction is commonly known as the fight or flight response. However, not all situations are actually dangerous, yet the body responds in the same tense way. Muscle tension can be associated with backaches, tension headaches, and numerous other physical symptoms.

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them.

Long-term effects of *regular practice* of progressive muscle relaxation include:

- A decrease in generalized anxiety
- A decrease in anticipatory anxiety related to phobias
- Reduction in the frequency and duration of panic attacks
- Improved ability to face phobic situations through graded exposure
- Improved concentration
- An increased sense of control over moods
- Increased self-esteem
- Increased spontaneity and creativity

These known long-term benefits are sometimes called generalized effects-the relaxation experienced during *daily sessions* tends, after a month or two, to generalize to the rest of the day and enhance overall wellbeing. The *regular practice* of progressive muscle relaxation can go a long way towards helping a person to better manage anxiety, face fears, overcome panic, and feel better all around.

There are no known contradictions of progressive muscle relaxation unless the muscle groups to be tensed and relaxed have been injured.

Progressive Relaxation Exercise Link:

http://media.dartmouth.edu/~health/p_muscle_relax.mp3