

Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Transcript for Therapists

“This exercise teaches you how to help your muscles relax so that you can better handle situations or times when you are worried, tense, or feel nervous. Can you think of a situation that makes you feel worried, tense, or nervous? [If child is not forthcoming with a situation, the therapist prompts with something like, ‘How about when you have a big test?’ or ‘How about when an adult yells at you?'] These are all times when you can use deep muscle relaxation.”

“To do deep muscle relaxation, you will:

1. Take a deep breath
2. Tense each muscle group for 5 seconds
3. Say or think the word “relax.”
4. Let the deep breath out.
5. Let go of the tension in your muscle.”

“Now, let’s do this together I’ll show you. Let’s start with your left hand and arm.”

“Take a deep breath. Tense your left hand and arm by making a fist. [The therapist praises the correct response.] One one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand, four one thousand, five one thousand. Think or say “relax.” Let your deep breath out. Now, let go of the tension in your left hand and arm.”

*Resource: Kolko, D. & Cupit Swenson, C.
Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and
Traumatic Stress 03*

“Feel that relaxed feeling in your left hand and arm. They may be warm or tingly. Now, let’s tense that same muscle group again.” [The therapist leads the child through the exact same process with the left hand and arm.]

Before Muscle Relaxation



After Muscle Relaxation

[Then the therapist leads the child in two sets of deep muscle relaxation of the following muscle groups, in this order: (a) right hand and arm, as above; (b) arms and shoulders, by stretching the arms out in front and then over the head; (c) shoulder and neck, by pulling the shoulders up to the ears and the head down into the shoulders, much like a big shrug; (d) jaw, by biting down hard on the teeth; (e) face and nose, by wrinkling the nose; (f) stomach, by tightening it very tight and making the stomach very hard; and (g) legs and feet, by pushing down on the floor hard with toes spread apart.]