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Muscle relaxation technique Part of a series onPsychology Outline History Subfields Basic types Abnormal Behavioral Behavioral genetics Biological Cognitive/Cognitivism Comparative Cross-cultural Cultural Differential Developmental Evolutionary Experimental Mathematical Neuropsychology Personality Positive Psychodynamic Psychometrics Quantitative Social Applied psychology Applied behavior analysis Clinical Community Consumer Counseling Critical Educational Environmental Ergonomics Food Forensic Health Humanistic Industrial and organizational Legal Medical Military Music Occupational health Political Psychometrics Religion School Sport Traffic Lists Disciplines Organizations Psychologists Psychotherapies Research methods Theories Timeline Topics Psychology portalvte For other uses, see PMR (disambiguation). Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a non-pharmacological method of deep muscle relaxation, based on the premise that muscle tension is the body's psychological response to anxiety-provoking thoughts and that muscle relaxation blocks anxiety.[1] The technique involves learning to monitor the tension in specific muscle groups by first tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. When this tension is released, the attention is directed towards the differences felt during tension and relaxation so that the patient learns to recognise the contrast between the states.[2][3] History Initial development of PMR by American physician Edmund Jacobson and presented first in 1908 at Harvard University.[4] In 1929, Jacobson published the book Progressive Relaxation, which included a detailed procedure for removing muscular tension. His work led to the use of the word "relax", in the sense of "to become less tense, anxious or stressed, to calm down".[5][6] He continued to work on this topic throughout his life and wrote several books about it.[5] Applications Insomnia Nowadays, non-pharmacological treatment of insomnia has become an alternative replacement or complement to routine medical care. Progressive muscle relaxation is used as a treatment for some causes of insomnia. They are meant to reduce physical tension and interrupt the racing thoughts processes that affect sleep.[7] A common psychological problem of cancer patients and particularly for those in pain is insomnia. Some studies reported benefits of the progressive muscle relaxation technique used by cancer patients. One of them postulated: "the significant effect for the muscle relaxation group on the sleep onset latency indicates that the subjects' self-reported insomnia was significantly improved. Total sleep time was increased as well".[8] Pain relief Pain is one of the most frequent symptoms in patients undergoing surgery or cancer chemotherapy and various treatments are proposed for its relief, including relaxation techniques. Progressive muscle relaxation technique is suggested to lead to an increase in blood flow which supplies more oxygen, thus enhancing local metabolism, resulting in reduced pain and muscle spasms.[citation needed] Progressive muscle relaxation might also reduce the perception of pain as well as providing pain relief by the patients after undergoing surgery. A recent study indicated "a significant tension decrease in all the types of muscles between pre- and post-relaxation situations for patients after surgery a result of progressive muscle relaxation".[9] It has also been indicated that the progressive muscle relaxation technique seems to show some positive achievements in the treatment of chronic pelvic pain in women. In the case of chronic pain it seems to not be possible to avoid the pain itself but rather to avoid the perceived threat (pain). Chronic pelvic pain is often associated with or resulting from the functions of the abdominal nervous system (often called "neuropathic pain"). If medications prescribed fail to be successful, patients may be referred to a practice specializing in a pain management, such as progressive muscle relaxation technique. Here, the treatment aims to release tightness of the muscles in the abdomen and lower back, as well as musculoskeletal tension.[10] Schizophrenia Progressive muscle relaxation has been used in psychiatric settings as an alternative means of coping with subjective stress and states of anxiety. A few modern studies have reported a therapeutic effectiveness on psychological distress and anxiety symptoms as well as on response/remission for people with schizophrenia. There is some evidence revealing a decrease in stress level after regular training, after which patients tend to feel a greater sense of wellness and well-being. Moreover, they aim to learn how to manage stressful situations, especially those related to "self-control", "assuming responsibility" and "positive re-evaluation". However, the application of progressive muscle relaxation technique to the patients with schizophrenia is not widely used and the application requires additional research.[11][12] Sport Professional sports require constant tension from athletes both physically and mentally, therefore it has been hypothesized that progressive muscle relaxation techniques may help athletes achieve optimal performance and optimize functioning in daily life.[citation needed] Long term effects According to Encyclopedia of medicine by Miller-Keane, long term effects of practicing progressive muscle relaxation include: A decrease in generalized level of 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[13] See also Autogenic training Autosuggestion Biofeedback Yoga nidra References ^ "progressive muscle relaxation". TheFreeDictionary.com. Archived from the original on 2018-07-13. Retrieved 2017-07-20. ^ Jacobson, E. (1938). Progressive relaxation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press ^ Ibañez-Tarin, C.; Manzanera-Escartí, R. (2012-09-01). "Técnicas cognitivo-conductuales de fácil aplicación en atención primaria (I)". SEMERGEN: Medicina de Familia (in Spanish). 38 (6): 377–387. doi:10.1016/j.semerg.2011.07.019. ISSN 1138-3593. ^ Jacobson, E. (1929). Progressive relaxation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press ^ a b "The man who invented relaxation". BBC News. 2015-11-04. Retrieved 2021-11-07. ^ Bernstein, Douglas (2000). New directions in progressive relaxation training - a guidebook for helping professionals. Westport, Conn. : Praeger. pp. 2–5. ISBN 0275968375. ^ Blanu, Monica; Bloch, Boaz; Vadas, Limor; Arnon, Zahi; Ziv, Naomi; Kremer, Ilana; Haimov, Iris (7 August 2012). 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Pelvic Pain in Women, an Issue of Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinics, E-Book. ISBN 978-0-323-32336-9. ^ Melo-Dias, Carlos; Alves Apóstolo, João Luis; Batista Cardoso, Daniela Filipa (October 2014). "Effectiveness of progressive muscle relaxation training for adults diagnosed with schizophrenia: a systematic review protocol". JBI Database of Systematic Reviews and Implementation Reports. 12 (10): 85–97. doi:10.1111/jbirsir.2014.1639. ^ Vancampfort, Davy; Correil, Christoph U; Scheewe, Thomas W; Probst, Michel; De Herdt, Amber; Knapen, Jan; De Hert, Marc (27 July 2012). "Progressive muscle relaxation in persons with schizophrenia: a systematic review of randomized controlled trials". Clinical Rehabilitation. 27 (4): 291–298. doi:10.1177/0269215512455531. PMID 22843353. ^ O'Toole, Marie T., ed. (2005). Encyclopedia & Dictionary of medicine, nursing, & allied health (7th Revised ed.). Philadelphia: Saunders. ISBN 9781416026044. Retrieved from "Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is one of the simplest and easiest to learn techniques for relaxation. It is a widely-used procedure that was originally developed by Dr. Edmund Jacobson in the early 1920s. Dr. Jacobson published Progressive Relaxation in 1938, detailing this method of relaxation involving alternately tensing and relaxing 14 different muscle groups. Research PMR was originally used to treat symptoms of anxiety, but more recently it has been found to be effective for treating tension headaches, migraines, temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJ), neck pain, insomnia, bipolar disorder, anxiety, backaches, and high blood pressure. (For more information, refer to Power of the Mind.) PMR is a recommended practice to relax the body and mind at bedtime to fall asleep more easily and get a deeper night sleep. It was rated an effective nonpharmacologic treatment of chronic insomnia by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (1999). What It Is PMR is a two-step relaxation practice to reduce stress and build awareness of sensations of tension and deep relaxation in various muscle groups. The first step in this practice is to create tension in specific muscle groups and begin to notice what tension feels like in this body part. The second step is to then release this muscle tension and begin to notice what a relaxed muscle feels like as the tension drains away. By moving through the body by alternately tensing and relaxing different muscle groups in a certain order, one builds awareness of how to recognize and differentiate between the associated feelings of a tensed muscle and a completely relaxed one. Often, it is recommended to create tension and relaxation several times in the same muscle groups, with diminishing degrees of tension, to deepen awareness and train the body to more deeply relax. Through repetitive practice, a person can then induce physical muscular relaxation at the first signs of the tension that accompanies stress. After the practice, there may be one or two areas that are still tense, requiring one to repeat tensing and relaxing that muscle group. How It Is Taught PMR can be done lying down or sitting. It is very important to not strain or overly tense the muscle. Just creating a little bit of tension is sufficient to cultivate greater awareness of tension in the body and the relaxation that occurs when contracted muscles are released. If any of the exercises cause discomfort or cramping, ease up, stop or skip this body part entirely so as not to exacerbate any pre-existing injury or cause pain. Also, pay special attention to not holding the breath while tensing up muscles as this can inadvertently cause stress in the body. One way to avoid this is to synchronize the breath with movements in the body. That is, breathe in while creating tension and breathe out when releasing the tension. This rhythmic pattern of breathing and movement can enhance the feeling of relaxation throughout the body and help calm the mind. You might experiment with saying a phrase to elicit relaxation, such as the word RELAX, each time you release a muscle group. Though this technique is simple, it may take several sessions of practice before it is completely mastered. Once this practice is learned, an abbreviated version can be practiced by creating tension in certain muscle groups. For example, a shorthand method might include tensing only hands and arms or just the forehead, eyes and jaw. It is possible to become so proficient at PMR that it is only necessary to focus on one muscle group to produce these results. Tightening and relaxing the first muscle group for each area of the body, while saying the word RELAX, is one way to shorten the practice with experience. Considerations If you find yourself to be very tense already, actively tensing your muscles will not be a helpful practice to deeply relax. If this is the case, you might try passive progressive relaxation instead. (Refer to Progressive Relaxation.) It is recommended to consult with your physician before practicing PMR. This relaxation practice is not recommended if a person has a history of serious injuries, muscle spasms, or back problems, as the deliberate tensing of muscles could exacerbate any of these pre-existing conditions. Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise PMR can be practiced in a comfortable position sitting or lying down in a place that you will be undisturbed for 10-15 minutes. Focus your attention on each of the groups of muscles in the list below and work through them one muscle group at a time. Tense each muscle group and notice how that muscle feels when it is tensed. Hold this tension for five seconds while breathing in. Then, release and relax that muscle all at once. Pay close attention to the feeling of relaxation when releasing the contracted muscle. Practice tensing this same muscle group one or two more times but using less and less tension each time. This helps build awareness of tension in the body and improves the ability to differentiate between tension and relaxation in certain muscle groups. Experiment with saying the word RELAX each time you release a muscle group to deepen the feeling of relaxation in the mind and body. When you have a good sense of what it feels like to be relaxed in that area of the body, transition on to the next muscle group. Make sure to not hold your breath during this practice. If it begins to hurt, cramp or feel uncomfortable while tensing a certain part of the body, reduce the contraction or stop and move on to the next muscle group. When going through the PMR exercise, it is recommended to start at one part of your body and move systematically. For example, some people start with the feet, others at the face. You may do one side of the body (hand, arm, leg, foot) at a time, or do both sides at the same time. Fists Clench both fists and hold Biceps Bend elbows, tense bicep muscles Triceps Straighten arms, tense muscles in back of arms Forehead Wrinkle forehead in a frown and hold Eyes Close eyes tightly and hold Jaw Gently clench jaw Tongue Press against roof of mouth and hold Lips Press together and hold Neck Gently press neck back and hold. Then bring head forward to chest and hold Shoulders Shrug shoulders as high as you can and hold stomach out as much as possible and hold Lower back Gently arch up Buttocks Tighten muscles in buttocks and hold Thighs Tense by lifting legs off floor and hold Calves Press toes downward, as if burying them in sand Shins and ankles Bend feet toward head and hold Author(s) Progressive Muscle Relaxation was written by Shlagh A. Mirqin, PhD and by Janice Singles, PsyD (2016).





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