TEEN HANDOUT:

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well™



Anxiety Skill 2

What is Progressive Muscle Relaxation?

- Relaxation skills are ways to help relax our bodies and minds and increase feelings of calm and well-being.
- Our guide includes three different types of relaxation skills that can help you with anxiety. This handout provides an introduction to a skill called **progressive muscle relaxation.**
- Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing different muscle groups one at a time and then releasing them. An example is flexing your arm muscle, then relaxing it.
- Try some of our strategies below and see if they help you feel calmer, more relaxed, and more in control.

Here's How to Use Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Making relaxation an activity that you teach your family could help you practice your relaxation skills more consistently. Pick a time when you could begin giving one person, or your whole family, "relaxation lessons" (e.g., before saying goodnight and getting ready for bed).
- Encourage everyone to point out times when they used their new progressive muscle relaxation skills. If you notice a family member looking anxious before or during an activity, you can also suggest they try progressive muscle relaxation to see if it makes them feel better.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Practice

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script:

You can ask a parent or other support person to read this to you. Or record it on your phone or tablet and play the recording!

"Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. We are going to practice relaxing our muscles by squeezing them tight and then releasing them. Let's start with our legs. Stretch your legs out in front of you and point your toes. Hold your position and count to 5. Now relax your legs. Good job! Do that again. Stretch, hold for 5, and relax. Now make two fists like you are squeezing a lemon in each hand. Squeeze your lemons as tightly as you can to get the juice out for a count of 5. Now drop your lemons. Great job! Now repeat. Squeeze for 5 and drop. Let's next focus on our arms. Hold them out in front of you, stiff and straight for 5. Good. Now drop your arms to your sides like they are cooked, limp spaghetti. Now repeat. Stiff for 5 and then loose. Okay, now we're going to squeeze our stomach muscles as if we are trying to squeeze through a door. Hold them tight and count to 5! Now release. Great job. Repeat. Squeeze for 5 and release. Now we are going to scrunch up our faces like we are trying to get flies off our noses. Keep your face scrunched up for 5! Good. Release. Again, scrunch for 5 and release. For our last step we are going to hold our whole body as tight and scrunched up as we can. Tense all the parts and count to 5! Great job. Now release. Do that one last time. Tense for 5, now relax. Notice how good it feels to relax all your muscles. You can open your eyes."

Progressive Muscle Relaxation on Your Own:

Time to get creative and have fun! If you like this skill, try to come up with your own script or do an internet search for additional progressive muscle relaxation scripts. You don't have to stop there, you can create your own or search for other examples of all the relaxation skills in this guide! Find a bunch that suit your personality and lifestyle.