



# stresscontrol

Face your fears; be more active; watch what you drink

## Step 5 Controlling your body

**Step 5 focuses on two very useful skills:**

**Relaxation**

**Exercise**

**These will teach you how to calm down your body**

# SKILL 1:

## Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR)

Stress fills you with energy and by tensing the muscles. PMR teaches you to fight this by:

- teaching you how to relax the muscles
- teaching you how to control your breathing.

These two skills will teach you how to control your body. The easiest way to learn it is by using a tape. You will get a CD/tape at Session 2. It is yours to keep.

**PMR divides into three parts:**

Part 1) Deep Relaxation

Part 2) Quick Relaxation

Part 3) Prevention

## **PART 1: Learning Deep Relaxation**

Deep relaxation is the form most favoured by experts in stress control. You will need a cassette or CD player. If you want to download the relaxation straight to a CD or mp3 / iPod, you will find it in the download section of [www.glasgowsteps.com](http://www.glasgowsteps.com)

One word of warning. If you have any problems such as a back injury and are concerned that PMR might make it worse, ask your GP for advice.

### **What is it?**

PMR teaches you how to relax your body and mind. You first become aware of the way stress affects your body (*'I didn't realise that my shoulders were up at my ears all day'*). Once you become aware of this, you then use the tape to get rid of it. Once you get good at it, you will feel stress creep into your body at a much earlier stage. So you will be able to nip it in the bud.

Like all skills, PMT takes time to pick up. You should expect that it will take a few weeks to even start to feel relaxed when you play the tape. Bear in mind you are learning something you have lost the knack of or even haven't had in the first place. So be patient.

### **Where should you play the tape?**

Play it in a room where you can get some peace and quiet and where you can be warm and comfy. Try different rooms to see which is best for you.

***DON'T*** play the tape while driving your car for obvious reasons.

### **Should you sit or lie down?**

Suit yourself. The best places may be the bed or the settee. You may prefer the floor. If you have a comfy chair (recliners are very good), you could use this.

### **When should you play your relaxation?**

**Every day.** Many people under stress find it hard to find time for PMR. You must work at this. Decide what time of day suits you best and then stick to this time.

### **What will happen when you play it?**

You will hear my voice. You will tense and relax various muscles. The idea is that you become aware of the difference between tension and relaxation in your muscles.

I will then lead you to slow your breathing to a steady pace.

Toward the end of the tape, you will move onto ways to relax your mind. After I stop talking, you could just stay where you are to enjoy the relaxed feeling. You count back from 4 to 1 to end.

*Please note that this is not a hypnotic tape so don't worry about going into a trance. You will be in complete control.*

## 10 tips to help you relax

**Get as comfy as you can before you start. Take off your shoes and wear loose clothes. Make sure the room is warm. If you can, take the phone off the hook. Make sure no-one in the house comes in the room while you play the tape. If they want to join in from the start then that is fine.**

At first, you should play the tape when you are feeling fairly calm. You will be able to concentrate better. This will let you pick up the skill more quickly.

**When you go to play the tape, you may think of all the other things you should be doing instead. This is a common problem in stress. Do not become distracted. You must set aside time to relax.**

As with learning any skill, practice makes perfect. So play the tape each day. Try to use it at the same time.

**Don't worry about how well or badly you are doing. Most people find that their concentration wanders during the first few weeks. This is normal. As you get used to the tape, this will improve. Let relaxation come naturally. Don't try to rush it. When the feeling comes, enjoy it.**

Use your Breathing Retraining skills (**see Step 4**) to boost the relaxation. Practise slowing down your breathing to about 10-12 breaths per minute at various times of the day (use the seconds hand on your watch). This will help you keep your body calm right across the day.

**PMR can leave you feeling nicely drowsy. Some people fall asleep. If you are one of them, don't worry but bear in mind that you are learning a skill. So you will get more out of it if you can stay awake. If you need to be alert after using the tape, e.g. driving, make sure that you feel fully on the ball before setting off.**

You may find that when you tense your muscles, you hold your breath. Don't worry; most people do this at the start. Try to keep the muscle tensing and breathing control separate.

**Keep a diary. This helps you see if you are making progress. There are diaries at the end of this handout. Fill them in after you play the tape each time.**

Keep playing your **Deep** tape until you can relax well. At this point, you should switch to **Quick** on side 2 of the tape.

## **PART 2: Learning Quick Relaxation**

This lets you fine-tune your new skills. The idea is the same as before except that now you can learn to relax more quickly. It is simply a quick version of what you have just learned. Same rules apply - play the Quick tape at the same time each day. As before, don't expect to pick it up at once. So don't be put off when it doesn't work first time.

If you want to play both sides of your tape each day then go ahead - you can't get enough relaxation. But the whole aim of PMR is, of course, to teach you a way to control your stress. You should aim to phase out your tape (you will get bored with it in any case). So your final job is:

## **PART 3: Prevention**

Think of a soldier entering enemy territory. He expects to be attacked at any moment. He carries a weapon so that he can fight back. As he is well trained, he knows what to look out for. If it comes to it, he knows how to win the fight. The soldier is you; the enemy is stress; the weapon is the skill of relaxation; enemy territory is anywhere you feel under stress.

With the aid of your new skill, you can go into these places armed with a weapon that you did not have before. You now have a way of staying in control. As you will be more alert to stress building up, you can nip it in the bud before it gets the chance to get a grip of you.

You do not have to run through all the parts of the tape. Stick to the bits you find best for you. This could be breathing control, relaxing your shoulders, etc. If you are with others, do the exercises no-one will notice.

**In summary, you should:**

**Start with Deep Relaxation / keep a diary.**

Play the tape/CD every day until you learn to relax.

**Move to Quick Relaxation.**

Play the tape/CD every day until you can relax quickly.

**Move to doing it on your own**

The aim here is to nip stress in the bud by relaxing at the very first sign of stress building up in your body

# SKILL 2:

## Exercise Therapy (ET)

### Exercise Therapy (ET)

This is a new approach to control over stress. We know that exercise is good for your health:

#### The benefits:

- ⇒ helps control weight
- ⇒ helps reduce blood pressure
- ⇒ helps keep your bones, muscles and joints healthy
- ⇒ improves your body shape
- ⇒ cuts down the chances of dying young
- ⇒ reduces risk of heart disease
- ⇒ reduces the risk of diabetes
- ⇒ reduces the risk of colon cancer
- ⇒ may stave off Alzheimers

So exercise makes sense if you want to stay fit. But we now know that exercise can also help fight stress. For this reason, it is now a part of 'Stress Control'.

You may have found that you feel better after exercise. This is good but it won't last long. To get long lasting benefit, you need to do regular exercise.

#### Do I have to get on the lycra gear?

**No.** You can do this in your house, outside or in a gym. Exercise could be:

- ⇒ going to a gym
- ⇒ brisk walk
- ⇒ jogging or running
- ⇒ swimming
- ⇒ golf
- ⇒ football

- ⇒ badminton
- ⇒ aerobic video or class

Make sure you choose something you like. You could do a range of things to give you a bit of variety. Bear in mind that if you do go to the gym, it is getting you out of the house. It also lets you meet others. This can help in itself.

### **How does exercise help stress?**

We know that it does help but we are not sure how it works. There are a few theories but we need to do a lot more research to find out more.

### **How much time do I need to spend?**

You should try to do at least 30 minutes most days of the week

### **Does this have to be at the one time?**

**No.** You could do break it up. You could spread it across the day by doing 15 minutes in the morning and 15 at night.

### **How hard must the exercise be?**

The guidelines say you should aim for *moderate* exercise.

### **What does that mean?**

It involves two things –

- you should be aware of your heart rate rising
- but you should not be so out of puff that you could not talk easily.

A *brisk walk* is moderate. So it does not mean you have to get out the lycra gear and head for the gym.

### **Do I need to be fit to start this?**

No. But you should check with your GP if you are unsure about this. It is best to build up slowly. So you might think of starting with daily short walks.

## **Do you have to be young to start this?**

**No.** All of us can be helped by this. If your GP has no concerns and if you start at the right level, then age is of no concern.

## **Final words**

Getting started is the hardest bit. Once you get into your stride, you will find yourself looking forward to both your PMR and exercise.

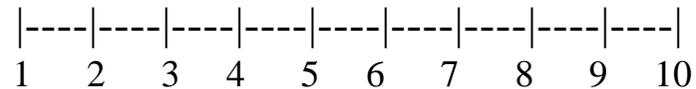
Fill out the final form in this handout to get you started.

## **Last words**

The aim of **Step 5** is to control the body. **Step 6** now adds to the two skills you learned by teaching you to control your thoughts. Make sure you pick up this handout at session 2. Make sure you read it before you come to session 3.

## Stress Control: Relaxation diary

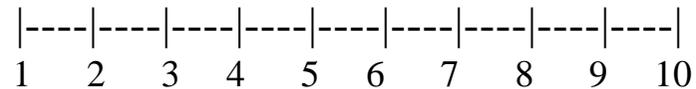
Before you play your tape, rate how stressful you feel using the 1-10 scale below. A score of 10 would mean your stress could not be worse. A score of 1 would mean you were not under any stress. Your score will probably be somewhere in between. When the tape ends, rate your stress again using the same scale. You should also make some notes about how you got on listening to the tape. Look at the example below.



	Time and place	Stress level before playing tape	Stress level after playing tape	Comments
<i>Example</i>	7pm, in the back bedroom	7	5	Lost my concentration for a bit but got it back before the end. Getting the breathing sorted out now and I felt a bit better by the time the tape ended. I'll try relaxing like this at work tomorrow.
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				
Day 6				
Day 7				

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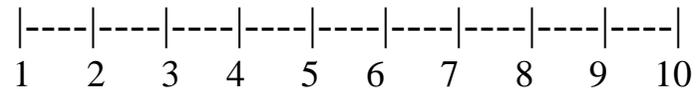
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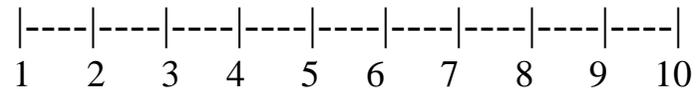
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**How could exercise help me?**

1)

2)

3)

**What are the main things stopping me?**

1)

2)

3)