

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

Begin by finding a comfortable position to sit or lie down in. Make sure that you are comfortable. Let your hands rest loosely in your lap, or by your side. And, if you are comfortable, gently close your eyes.

Become aware of your breathing, and notice how your abdomen rises and falls with each breath...

Now take a long slow deep breath in through your nose, all the way down into your stomach. Hold the breath for just a moment, and then exhale through your mouth. Allow your breath to carry away all stress and tension as the air floods out of your lungs.

Take another slow breath in through your nose. Fill your lungs completely. Hold it for a moment...and release the breath through your mouth. Empty your lungs completely with your out-breath.

Take a third deep breath in. Hold it for a moment, and then let it go.

Feel that your body has already undergone a change. The tension in your body has begun to loosen and subside.

Now let your breathing rhythm return to normal...and relax....

During this relaxation I will ask you to tense various muscles throughout your body. Please do this without straining. You do not need to exert yourself, just contract each muscle firmly but gently as you breathe in. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can simply relax and breathe normally.

Bring your awareness to your feet and toes. Breathe in deeply through your nose, and as you do, gradually curl your toes down and tense the muscles in the soles of your feet. Hold your breath for just a few seconds and then release the muscles

in your feet as you breathe out. Feel the tension in your feet wash away as you exhale. Notice how different your feet feel when tensed and when they are relaxed.

Take another deep breath in again, tense the muscles in the soles of your feet and hold this position for a few seconds.

Now release. Feel yourself relaxing more and more deeply with each breath. Your whole body is becoming heavier, softer and more relaxed as each moment passes.

Now bring your awareness to your lower legs...to your calf muscles. As you draw in a nice deep breath, point your toes up towards your knees and tighten these muscles. Hold for just a moment, and then let those muscles go limp as you exhale.

Once again, draw in a deep breath...and tighten your calf muscles. Hold for a few seconds, and then let it all go. Feel your muscles relax, and feel the tension washing away with your out-breath.

In a moment you will tense the muscles in the front of your thighs. If you are lying down, you can do this by trying to straighten your legs. You'll feel the muscles pulling your kneecap upwards. If you are seated, you can tense these muscles by pushing your heels down onto the floor.

Take a deep breath in, and tense the muscles in your thighs. Hold for just a moment, and then release everything. As you do this, the blood flow to your muscles increases, and you may notice a warm tingling sensation. Enjoy this feeling of soothing relaxation in your thighs.

Again, breathe in deeply and tighten your thigh muscles. Hold for a moment. Now release. Focus on letting your muscles go limp and loose.

Draw in a nice deep breath and gradually tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold this contraction for a few seconds, and then release your breath. Feel the tension leaving your

muscles. Feel them relaxing completely.

Once more, breathe in deeply and tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold for a moment. Now release them. You are becoming more and more deeply relaxed.

Take another breath, and this time, gradually tighten all the muscles in your legs, from your feet to your buttocks. Do this in whatever way feels natural and comfortable to you. Hold it... and now release all these large strong muscles. Enjoy the sensation of release as you become even more deeply relaxed.

Now bring your awareness to your stomach. Draw in a nice deep breath and then tighten these muscles. Imagine you are trying to touch your belly button to your spine. Now release your breath and let your muscles relax. Notice the sensation of relief that comes from letting go.

Once again, draw in a deep breath and then tighten your stomach muscles. Hold for

a few seconds... and then let them relax as you exhale and release all tension.

Bring your awareness to the muscles in your back. As you slowly breathe in, arch your back slightly and tighten these muscles...Now release your breath and let your muscles relax.

Again, draw in a deep breath and then tighten your back muscles. Hold for a few seconds...and then let them relax and release.

Now give your attention to your shoulder muscles and the muscles in your neck. As you slowly draw in a nice deep breath, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles firmly. Now breathe out completely, and allow your contracted muscles to go loose and limp.

Again, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles firmly.

Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Feel the heaviness in your body now. Enjoy the feeling. Feel yourself becoming heavier and heavier. Feel yourself becoming more and more deeply relaxed.

You are calm, secure, at peace.

Now it's time to let go of all the tension in your arms and hands. Let's start with your upper arms.

As you breathe in, raise your wrists towards your shoulders and tighten the muscles in your upper arms. Hold that breath and that contraction for just a moment...and then gently lower your arms and breathe all the way out. You may feel a warm, burning sensation in your muscles when you tighten them. Feel how relaxing it is to release that tightness and to breathe away all tension.

As you curl your upper arms again, tighten the muscles as you breathe in. Breathe in deeply. Now relax your arms and breathe out.

Now bring your awareness to your forearms. As you breathe

in, curl your hands inwards as though you are trying to touch the inside of your elbows with your fingertips. Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Again, take a deep breath in, and tighten the muscles in your forearms. Hold it for a moment, and then release them. Feel the tension washing away.

Now, take another breath in and tightly clench your fists. When you have finished breathing in, hold for just a few seconds, and then release. Notice any feelings of buzzing or throbbing. Your hands are becoming very soft and relaxed.

Take another deep breath in and clench your fists again. Hold for just a few seconds, and then release. Let your fingers go limp.

Your arms and hands are feeling heavy and relaxed.

Take a couple of nice long slow breaths now, and just relax. Feel yourself slipping even deeper into a state of complete rest.

Now tighten the muscles in your face by squeezing your eyes shut and clenching your lips together. As you do, breathe in fully. Hold it...now breathe out and relax all your facial muscles. Feel your face softening.

Once more, breathe in deeply while you scrunch the muscles in your eyes and lips....and release.

Now bring your awareness to the muscles in your jaw. Take a deep breath in, and then open your mouth as wide as you can. Feel your jaw muscles stretching and tightening. Now exhale and allow your mouth to gently close.

Again, fill your lungs with air and then open your mouth wide. Now let your mouth relax and let your breath flood all the way out.

You are now completely relaxed from the tips of your toes to the top of your head.

Please take a few more minutes to rest. Relax. Listen to the sound of your breathing and enjoy the lovely, warm sensation of physical relaxation. When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

FIVE STEPS TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Basic meditation, the practice of doing nothing and being tuned in to your own mind at the same time, can be frustrating at first. But research shows it reduces stress and increases focus.



1.

Sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor or in a chair. Keep your back straight and let your shoulders drop. Take a deep breath and close your eyes if you wish.



2.

Notice your breath. Don't change your breathing, but focus on the sensation of air moving in and out of your lungs.



3.

As thoughts come into your mind and distract you from your breathing, acknowledge those thoughts and then return to focusing on your breathing each time.

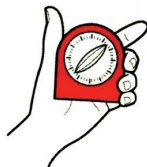
4.



Don't judge yourself or try to ignore distractions. Your job is simply to notice that your mind has wandered and to bring your attention back to your breathing.

5.

Start by doing this 10 minutes a day for a week. The more you meditate regularly, the easier it will be to keep your attention where you want it.



Adapted from *Full Catastrophe Living*, 2nd edition, by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mountain Meditation Script

Begin by finding a position of stability and poise, upper body balanced over your hips and shoulders in a comfortable but alert posture, hands on your lap or your knees, arms hanging by their own weight, stable and relaxed. Take a moment to check in with your body and sense what is going on in your feet... legs... hips... lower and upper body... arms... shoulders... neck... head...

If you are comfortable, allow your eyes to close, bringing awareness to breath, the actual physical sensations, feeling each breath as it comes in and goes out... letting the breath be just as it is, without trying to change or manipulate it in any way... allowing it to flow easily and naturally, with its own rhythm and pace, knowing you are breathing perfectly well right now, nothing for you to do...

Allowing the body to be still and sitting with a sense of dignity, a sense of resolve, a sense of being complete, whole, in this very moment, with your posture reflecting this sense of wholeness...

(long pause)

As you sit here, letting an image form in your mind's eye, of the most magnificent or beautiful mountain you know or have seen or can imagine..., letting it gradually come into greater focus... and even if it doesn't come as a visual image, allowing the sense of this mountain and feeling its overall shape, its lofty peak or peaks high in the sky, the large base rooted in the bedrock of the earth's crust, it's steep or gently sloping sides...

Noticing how massive it is, how solid, how unmoving, how beautiful, whether from a far or up close...

(pause)

Perhaps your mountain has snow blanketing its top and trees reaching down to the base, or rugged granite sides... there may be streams and waterfalls cascading down the slopes... there may be one peak or a series of peaks, or with meadows and high lakes...

Observing it, noting its qualities and when you feel ready, seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body sitting here so that your body and the mountain in your mind's eye become one so that as you sit here, you share in the massiveness and the stillness and majesty of the mountain, you become the mountain.

Grounded in the sitting posture, your head becomes the lofty peak, supported by the rest of the body and affording a panoramic view. Your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain. Your buttocks and legs the solid base, rooted to your cushion or your chair, experiencing in your body a sense of uplift from deep within your pelvis and spine.

With each breath, as you continue sitting, becoming a little more a breathing mountain, alive and vital, yet unwavering in your inner stillness, completely what you are, beyond words and thought, a centered, grounded, unmoving presence...

As you sit here, becoming aware of the fact that as the sun travels across the sky, the light and shadows and colors are changing virtually moment by moment in the mountain's stillness, and the surface teems with life and activity... streams, melting snow, waterfalls, plants and wildlife.

As the mountain sits, seeing and feeling how night follows day and day follows night. The bright warming sun, followed by the cool night sky studded with stars, and the gradual dawning of a new day...

Through it all, the mountain just sits, experiencing change in each moment, constantly changing, yet always just being itself. It remains still as the seasons flow into one another and as the weather changes

moment by moment and day by day, calmness abiding all change...

In summer, there is no snow on the mountain except perhaps for the very peaks or in crags shielded from direct sunlight.

In the fall, the mountain may wear a coat of brilliant fire colors.

In winter, a blanket of snow and ice.

In any season, it may find itself at times enshrouded in clouds or fog or pelted by freezing rain. People may come to see the mountain and comment on how beautiful it is or how it's not a good day to see the mountain, that it's too cloudy or rainy or foggy or dark.

None of this matters to the mountain, which remains at all times its essential self. Clouds may come and clouds may go, tourists may like it or not. The mountain's magnificence and beauty are not changed one bit by whether people see it or not, seen or unseen, in sun or clouds, broiling or frigid, day or night.

It just sits, being itself.

At times visited by violent storms, buffeted by snow and rain and winds of unthinkable magnitude.

Through it all, the mountain sits.

Spring comes, trees leaf out, flowers bloom in the high meadows and slopes, birds sing in the trees once again. Streams overflow with the waters of melting snow.

Through it all, the mountain continues to sit, unmoved by the weather, by what happens on its surface, by the world of appearances... remaining its essential self, through the seasons, the changing weather, the activity ebbing and flowing on its surface...

In the same way, as we sit in meditation, we can learn to experience the mountain, we can embody the same central, unwavering stillness and groundedness in the face of everything that changes in our own lives, over seconds, over hours, over years.

In our lives and in our meditation practice, we experience constantly the changing nature of mind and body and of the outer world, we have our own periods of light and darkness, activity and inactivity, our moments of color and our moments of drabness.

It's true that we experience storms of varying intensity and violence in the outer world and in our own minds and bodies, buffeted by high winds, by cold and rain, we endure periods of darkness and pain, as well as the moments of joy and uplift, even our appearance changes constantly, experiencing a weather of its own...

By becoming the mountain in our meditation practice, we can link up with its strength and stability and adopt them for our own. We can use its energies to support our energy to encounter each moment with mindfulness and equanimity and clarity.

It may help us to see that our thoughts and feelings, our preoccupations, our emotional

storms and crises, even the things that happen to us are very much like the weather on the mountain. We tend to take it all personally, but its strongest characteristic is impersonal.

The weather of our own lives is not to be ignored or denied, it is to be encountered, honored, felt, known for what it is, and held in awareness... And in holding it in this way, we come to know a deeper silence and stillness and wisdom.

Mountains have this to teach us and much more if we can let it in...

So if you find you resonate in some way with the strength and stability of the mountain in your sitting, it may be helpful to use it from time to time in your meditation practice, to remind you of what it means to sit mindfully with resolve and with wakefulness, in true stillness...

Continue to sustain the mountain meditation on your own for the next few moments and when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.
