

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script for Elementary School Children

The purpose of teaching Progressive Muscle Relaxation techniques to children is to provide a tool for dealing with anger, anxiety, and other difficult emotions. During these sessions, it may be helpful to have soft, soothing music playing in the background, while speaking in a low, calming voice, in order to foster a more relaxing atmosphere. Follow the scripts in the order provided below, when teaching Progressive Muscle Relaxation to children.

There are six areas that we will be focusing on:

1. Feet
2. Legs
3. Stomach
4. Arms and Hands
5. Face
6. Whole Body

1. Feet:

“While sitting with your eyes gently closed, imagine that you are in a great big sandbox playing. All of a sudden, a kid that you don’t know runs up and spills a bucket of water all over the sand where you are sitting. You feel yourself begin to get angry, but instead, you decide to squish your bare toes in the wet sand. Squish the sand and scrunch your toes real hard (hold this for 3–5 seconds). Now relax your feet. Notice how tense they feel while they are squishing the wet sand and how relaxed and good they feel when they loosen up.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

2. Legs:

“Now we are going to use our imaginations to help us learn how to tense and relax our leg muscles. While sitting, gently close your eyes and imagine you are once again in that same sand box. This time, however, when the kid spills water on the sand near you, you squeeze your leg muscles. To do this, you use your leg muscles to push your legs down, down, down into the sand, as if you were trying to push your way right through the bottom of that sand box! Push hard (hold this for 3–5 seconds). Now relax your legs. Notice how calm and loose your leg muscles feel after tensing them so.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

3. Stomach:

“To learn how to relax our tummy muscles we are going to first suck in our tummies, making them as tight and skinny as possible, and then relax them, letting our tummies go back to their normal shape. To do this, close your eyes and imagine that you need to slip through a door that won’t open all the way. The space is just big enough if you pull your tummy in as much as possible. Pull your tummy in tight, tight, tight (hold this for 3–5 seconds). Then let out your tummy with a great big breath (whoosh). Think about how tense your tummy just was, and how nice and relaxed it feels now.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

4. Arms and Hands:

“As we make our way through the different muscles in our bodies, we come across our arms and hands. Imagine that you are on the playground and someone has just hit you with a rubber ball. You pick up the ball, but instead of throwing it back at the kid who hit you, you hold it in your hands and squeeze the ball as hard as you can. Clasp your fingers together (demonstrate clasping your fingers together if they need help visualizing it), and pretend that you are squeezing that ball. Push, push, push as hard as you can! Pretend that all of your strength is going to pop that ball! (Hold this for 3–5 seconds.) Now relax. Let the ball drop from your hands and roll on the ground by your feet. Breathing calmly, notice how good your arms and hands are feeling now that they are nice and relaxed.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

5. Face:

“We have finally made our way all the way to the tippy top of our bodies: our face! For this one, I want you to close your eyes and imagine someone just gave you a piece of sour lemon to eat. Dig your teeth into that lemon, and feel how sour it is! Feel it as it makes your lips pucker up, your nose squish, your eyes close tight, tight, tight, and your eyebrows wrinkle up on your forehead! (Hold this for 3–5 seconds.) Now relax your face. Notice how good it feels to relax those muscles after tightening them up so.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

6. Whole Body:

“Finally, we are going to use all of our muscles to help our bodies relax and be calm. Close your eyes and imagine that you have heard a loud noise that scares you. All at once, tense every muscle in your body. Squish your toes, squeeze your leg muscles, ball your fists and tense your arm muscles, pull in your tummy, and tighten your face muscles. Hold it... (hold this for 3–5 seconds). Now relax with a big deep breath out (whoosh). Gently move your head from side to side, wriggle your fingers, let your legs hang loosely off the chair (or whatever the child is sitting on), and relax all of the muscles of your face and tummy. Breathe calm, deep, soothing breaths. Feel how loose and relaxed your whole body is. Notice how each muscle came together to help you relax and how good it feels now that we are done.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.