

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script for Middle 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 seven areas that we will be focusing on:**

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

## 1. Feet:

“We are going to practice different ways to let our muscles help our bodies calm down and relax when something stressful or upsetting happens. Sit comfortably, close your eyes, and breathe calm, soothing breaths. Imagine that you are in gym class and a classmate has just run into you without acknowledging you or saying “I’m sorry.” Instead of starting a fight with him/her, stay where you are. With your feet firmly on the ground curl up your toes as much as you can inside your shoes. Hold it and keep it tense (hold for 3–5 seconds). Now relax. Feel how, as your muscles relax, you also feel a sense of calm.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

## 2. Legs:

“Next, we are going to practice using our leg muscles to help us feel calmer when something makes us angry. Imagine once again that you are in gym class, and that same classmate has run into you without apologizing. This time tense your legs. Feel each muscle as it becomes stronger and stronger, pushing into the ground. Imagine that you are a strong statue that no one can knock down! Hold it just a little bit more (3–5 seconds), and relax. Exhale a big breath as you relax your leg muscles. Notice how loose and calm your legs now feel.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

## 3. Stomach:

“To learn how to relax our stomach muscles we are going to first suck in our stomach, using our muscles to make them as tight and skinny as possible. Hold it for a few seconds, then with a big exhale breath we are going to relax our stomach muscles as we breathe out. Remember to make sure that the muscles in your stomach are as tight as possible. After you exhale, pay attention to how relaxed and good your stomach is feeling.”

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. Ball your hands into tight fists. Allow your arm muscles to help your hands become stronger and stronger. It might help to imagine that someone has just stepped on your foot and you are tensing your arms and hands to keep from reacting, and help yourself calm down. Hold this for 3 to 5 seconds. Now release these muscles. Allow your arms to hang gently at your sides. Wiggle your fingers and breathe calm soothing breaths. 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. Shoulders and Neck:

“The next area we are going to focus on is our shoulder and neck. Pull your shoulders up high, as close as you can get them to your ears, and pull your chin down towards your chest. Tighten and tense these muscles as you hold them in this position for a few seconds. Now, relax. Tilt your head from side to side to help these muscles unwind. Note how much better your shoulders and neck are feeling after this exercise.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

#### 6. Face:

“We have finally made our way all the way up to the top of our bodies: our face! Make a disgusted face by puckering your lips, squishing your nose, closing your eyes tight, and wrinkling your brow. Hold this face for a few seconds and release. Breathe a sigh of relief as you relax all of the muscles on your face. Pay attention to how good it feels to relax those muscles after tightening them up so.”

Repeat the tension and relaxation procedure two or three times.

#### 7. Whole Body:

“Finally, we are going to use all of the muscles in our bodies to help us relax and be calm. In order to do this, all at once, tense every muscle in your body. Squish your toes, squeeze your leg muscles, ball your fists, tense your arm muscles, pull in your stomach, and tighten your face muscles. Hold it for a few seconds and relax with a big deep breath out. Gently move your head from side to side, wiggle your fingers, let your legs relax, and loosen all of the muscles of your face and stomach. 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.