

Pause. Notice. Choose.



Mindful Moment: Muscle Tension and Relaxation Exercise

The facilitator can choose all or parts of this exercise depending on your time. The intention is to build body awareness; we will be practicing muscle tension and muscle relaxation.

Find a comfortable position, making sure you feel supported, either by a chair or the floor. Sometimes we say sitting with a firm back and an open heart. Take a deep breath; let it out slowly and continue breathing in this way.

Take a moment to scan your body, noticing sensations: where you might feel muscle tension, or relaxation. Maybe aches and pains or noticing that your body feels good.

We will be alternately tensing and relaxing specific groups of muscles. After tension, you may notice that a muscle will be more relaxed than prior to the tensing. Notice the feel of the muscles, specifically the contrast between tension and relaxation. In time, you may come to notice tension in any specific muscle and be able to reduce that tension.

When we tense a particular muscle group be mindful not to hold your breath, grit your teeth, or squint. Breathe slowly and evenly and think only about the tension-relaxation contrast.

As with other Pause Notice Choose practices, you may notice your mind wanders. If it does, just gently bring it back to the sensations in your body. You may close your eyes or set a soft gaze around the room.

- Hands. Tense your hands, making a fist and hold it (hold for 6 seconds). Now relax your hands, fingers relaxed in your lap. (6 seconds).
- Arms. Raise your arms out straight in front of you, make a fist, begin flexing your muscles, starting with the fist, and going up to the shoulder socket. (6 seconds). Notice how it feels during the tension. Now release your arms and drop them to your lap. Now notice how they feel during relaxation. (6 seconds)
- Shoulders. Bring your shoulders up to your ears, notice the sensations, (6 seconds). Next, pull your shoulders back, (6 seconds). Now relax them to neutral, (6 seconds). Push the shoulders forward as if hunching, (6 seconds). And finally relax them to neutral again, (6 seconds).

- Neck. (lateral) With your shoulders straight and relaxed, turn your head slowly to the right, as far as you can and hold it (6 seconds), now relax to the front (6 seconds). Turn your head to the left (6 seconds), and relax to the front (6 seconds). Again, noticing any difference in how the muscles feel after tensing and relaxing.
- Neck. (forward) Bring your chin to your chest (6 seconds), now relax bringing the head back to neutral (6 seconds). Tilting the head back is not recommended.
- Mouth: Open your mouth as far as possible and hold (6 seconds), now relax the mouth (6 seconds).
- Eyes: Open your eyes as wide as possible and hold (6 seconds), now relax (6 seconds). Close your eyes tightly, holding a squint (6 seconds), now relax.
- Back: With your shoulders resting on the back of the chair, push your body forward so that your back is arched (6 seconds), now relax (6 seconds).
- Legs: Raise your legs in front of you, flex your feet and engage all your muscles from your feet to your hip socket (6 seconds). Remember to breathe and let go of any tension in the body other than your legs.
- Stomach: Pull in the stomach as far as possible and hold (6 seconds), relax (6 seconds), Push out the stomach and hold (6 seconds), now relax (6 seconds). What sensations do you notice?
- Toes: Dig your toes into the floor (6 seconds), relax (6 seconds).

Take a moment to just be, paying attention without judgement, to how your body feels now in contrast to the beginning. What did you learn?

And when you're ready, you can end your pause, notice, choose practice by slowly, opening your eyes, coming back into the room and thank yourself for this moment of care.

You might choose to journal your reflections from this practice, always learning and growing.

End of Mindful Moment.

Facilitator Asks a Few Questions for the Group

I would like to hear from a few of you:

What did you notice during that experience?

What did you like about it?

What did you find challenging?

Walton Family
Whole Health & Fitness