WORKSHEET 44 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Releasing the muscles

A brief progressive muscle relaxation

AIM

Learn to detect and release muscle tension by successively tensing and relaxing several muscle groups.

WHO IT IS FOR

Physical tension, anxiety, difficulty falling asleep. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

10-15 min a day for 2 weeks

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Explain the principle: tense a muscle group for about 5 seconds, then release and observe the relaxation for about 15-20 seconds.
2. Guide the order: hands and forearms, arms, face, neck and shoulders, back, abdomen, legs, feet.
3. Emphasise the contrast between tension and relaxation: it is what teaches you to spot tension in daily life.
4. Suggest daily practice, with a recording if possible.
5. Gradually move on to a shorter version (releasing without tensing).

POINTS TO WATCH

> Tense without pain. Adapt or skip a group if there is an injury, cramps, chronic pain or a medical problem. Some people feel more anxious at first when relaxing: reassure them, it is common.

REFERENCES

Bernstein, D. A. & Borkovec, T. D. (1973). Progressive Relaxation Training: A Manual for the Helping Professions. Research Press.

Manzoni, G. M., Pagnini, F., Castelnuovo, G. & Molinari, E. (2008). Relaxation training for anxiety: A ten-years systematic review with meta-analysis. BMC Psychiatry, 8, 41.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 44 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Releasing the muscles

Anxiety often hides in the muscles without us noticing. By tensing and releasing them, you learn to feel the difference and to relax more easily.

1. Get comfortable. For each part of the body: tense for about 5 seconds, without pain.
2. Let go all at once and observe the relaxation for 15-20 seconds.
3. In this order: hands, arms, face, neck and shoulders, back, abdomen, legs, feet.
4. At the end, stay a moment feeling your relaxed body.

Day	Duration	Tension before /10	Tension after /10

Where does my tension most often hide?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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