Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a systematic way of tensing and relaxing specific muscle groups in the body in order to decrease muscle tension and calm your body and mind. Unknowingly, we may hold or carry tension in our bodies as a result of experiencing stress or anxiety. PMR purposefully tenses and relaxes muscle groups and brings your awareness to physical sensations. This practice enables your mind and body to distinguish tension from relaxation. PMR can be practiced lying down or sitting comfortably in a chair. Each muscle or muscle group is tensed for about 5-7 seconds, and then relaxed for about 20-30 seconds. Muscles are tensed as you inhale and released as you slowly exhale.

**DIRECTIONS**

Begin by taking a few slow diaphragmatic breaths, inhaling through the nose, pausing, and slowly exhaling through the mouth. Tense, hold, and relax the following body parts and bring your awareness to the sensation of tense and relaxed muscles:

Tense the right foot by pointing your toes toward the floor...hold...relax. Tense the right lower leg and foot by pointing your toes toward your head, tensing all of the muscles in your ankles, calves, and thighs...hold...relax. Tense the entire right leg by pointing your toes away from your head, stretching out the backs of your thighs and tightening your buttocks, feeling yourself rise slightly off the chair or floor...hold...relax. Repeat with your left foot, lower leg and foot, and entire left leg. Tense the right hand (make a fist)...hold...relax. Tense the right forearm by holding your arm out straight...hold...relax. Tense the entire right arm...hold...relax. Repeat with your left hand, left forearm, and entire left arm. Tense the abdomen by pulling your stomach in and up toward your rib cage...hold...relax. Tense the neck by raising your shoulders up toward your ears as high as you can...hold...relax. Tense the shoulders, pulling your shoulder blades toward your spine...hold...relax. Tense the face by smiling and squeezing your eyes shut...hold...relax.