

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION FOR KIDS

PMR Helps...

- Allow kids to not only get rid of excess energy or stress, but helps kids with trauma histories recognize tension in their bodies while gaining awareness of what relaxation feels like (Smith, 2017).
- Any kids that are experiencing anxiety or self-regulation issues (Forman-Patel & Cerri, 2020; Lohaus & Klein-Hessling, 2003).

“Pro” Tips:

- Kids can do the “lemon squeezies” alone as a coping skill. This is a great tool during class where hands can be hidden under the desk so their peers won’t notice. The same goes for toes playing in the mud!
- Kids can’t sit for the entire story? Have them pretend their body is a robot – get super stiff all over at once instead. Then tell them to be a rag doll and go limp. They can have fun, make it a game where they move rigidly doing the robot, then go limp falling to the ground. If they love Toy Story I like to tell the to be a robot, then “uh oh! Andy’s back! Fall to the ground and don’t move!” This is an easy way to introduce the idea of PMR and then refine it later.

Set the scene:

Make sure the location is comfortable for your child, a comfy chair is essential, most ideal is a reclining chair but for kids, beanbags will work, and they can even lie down (Smith, 2017). Encourage them to take off their shoes to get even more comfortable, and close their eyes if they’re comfortable.

Introduce the intervention:

“Sometimes we all feel a little on edge, or nervous. When we have those feelings, our bodies can sometimes get tense or tight. This is an uncomfortable feeling – sometimes it even hurts to be tense. To help get rid of those tense feelings, we’re going to figure out a way to help you learn to relax your body. This will help you feel looser and calmer.” (Smith, D., 2017, para. 6)

Let’s Practice:

You can simply look up “Progressive Muscle Relaxation” on YouTube, or look up “InSight Timer” (use the free version, you don’t need the premium subscription) app for your phone or tablet. You can also use either of the following scripts and read them to your child: [PMR By the Pond](#) or [PMR Monster Relaxation](#).

Let’s process:

What felt comfortable? Tension or relaxation? What felt uncomfortable? Remember not to label bad or good – we don’t want kids to feel shame when they do notice tension, a normal reaction to stress or anxiety! Identify any noticeable behaviors from the practice, such as yawning or sighing, how did they feel about that? Transfer to the “real world” exploring times when maybe the tension was familiar. This could be a great way to identify triggers or areas of interest they may want to work on. Remember, this is not a skill that can be practiced and used only in needed situations! It must be practiced, convince the child by telling them: “we need to train and practice our relaxation skills when we are calm so that we are well-practiced before our ‘match’ or ‘concert’ — that is, when we are scared or angry” (Zandt & Barrett, 2017, p. 67).

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