

# Triple 'M' Relaxation

## Patient Information – Specialist Mental Health Service Physiotherapy

### Our Nervous system

When our body or brain detects something that makes us feel unsafe (such as something in our environment or within us) it prepares us for a 'fight', 'flight', 'freeze' or 'flop' response. These responses are started without us thinking and can make us feel 'revved up', anxious, angry, wanting to run away, 'zoned out' or wanting to withdraw. Sometimes we can recognise why these responses are there, and at other times we can't. The good news is that our nervous system can be retrained by movements and the muscles we activate or 'turn off', and helping our brain and body to communicate differently.

(\* Based on a Laura Mitchell approach of Reciprocal Inhibition.)

#### Muscles Off\*

When we are stressed or anxious our nervous system turns on the muscles that close our posture.

You may find shoulders lift or hunch, hands tighten into fists, toes curl, feet jiggle, legs squeeze together, arms close into your sides, hands prefer to press together, or teeth and jaw clench.

This can make our body feel uncomfortable. It can be difficult to feel calm when these muscles are switched on.

**Explore:** Positioning yourself where you feel most supported. This may be lying or sitting. You could use pillows or a blanket to feel more comfortable. Pay attention to any muscle tension, and explore whether you can soften this, or use the opposite muscles to 'open' instead of close / tighten.

#### Mindful

Sometimes it can be hard to make sense of what is happening in our body. Sensations may be uncomfortable or overwhelming, or we may feel disconnected.

We can help our system re-connect and settle by paying attention to physical sensations such as our position, supports, sounds, sights and movements. Noticing and feeling these sensations can help connect us to the 'here and now' rather than past or future. Over time this can help us become aware of when something feels different within our body, and to pick up on our physical reactions.

**Explore:** Taking notice of the position your body is currently in, what you're most aware of, and being curious about what your senses are paying attention to.

#### Movement

Movement is part of the way we live life and communicate.

Moving parts of our body while paying attention to sensation from our joints, muscles and tendons can give our brain extra sensory information about our body. Some movements may give us different feelings.

Movements with ease, or rhythmical movements can help calm our nervous system. Strong movements may give us a sense of empowerment.

**Explore:** Focussing on the sensation of movements and what your body likes and dislikes. How easy or hard is it to move? Does your body like fast or slow movements? Stretch or repeated movements? Strong or gentle/soft movements?

Find a supported position so your body doesn't have to work so hard.

To help turn your **muscles off**, explore each movement, with a hold, pause and release **OR** do each movement a few times rhythmically. As you move, allow your breath to be soft and gentle. See if you can pay **mindful** attention to what your body is feeling at rest, and how it feels or changes with **movement**. See if you can notice what your body likes, or even dislikes.

Pull your feet and toes towards your face and spread your toes

**Notice & Feel** the movement & muscles working

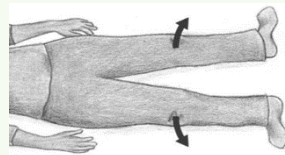


**Release + Rest**

**Notice & Feel** the difference

Turn your knees out

**Notice & Feel** the movement & muscles working



**Release + Rest**

**Notice & Feel** the difference

Move your arms away from your sides

**Notice & Feel** the movement & muscles working

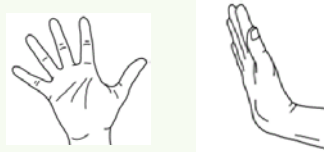


**Release + Rest**

**Notice & Feel** the difference

Straighten your fingers and pull your wrists back

**Notice & Feel** the movement & muscles working

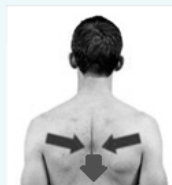


**Release + Rest**

**Notice & Feel** the difference

Pull your shoulders back and down

**Notice & Feel** the movement & muscles working

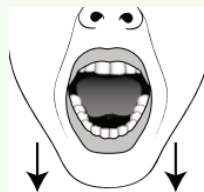


**Release + Rest**

**Notice & Feel** the difference

Lower your jaw

**Notice & Feel** the movement & muscles working



**Release + Rest**

**Notice & Feel** the difference

Lift your eyebrows towards your hairline

**Notice & Feel** the movement & muscles working



**Release + Rest**

**Notice & Feel** the difference

Created by: SMHS Physiotherapy, Hillmorton Hospital