

TENSION & RELEASE TECHNIQUES

Relaxation of body and mind is a skill meditators cultivate because tension in body and mind is an obstacle to experiencing conscious awareness of who and what you are beyond your body and mind.

The body is a portal to conscious awareness.
Tension makes it hard to open the door.

On the following pages you will find three versions of meditations/practices to help you develop the skill of consciously relaxing both body and mind. There are many versions of these techniques—you get to find the one(s) that work for you and master that/those.

This is a simple but foundational skill to develop. The basic practice is simply to tense muscle groups, and then release the tension.

- Do both the tensing and the releasing with full awareness.
- Keep the motion smooth as you move from low to middle to high tension. There is no need to tense at 100% tension—50% will be effective.

Be sure to maintain breath awareness as you do the practices. This could mean either:

- Being aware of the breath and keeping it smooth, easy, and rhythmic, as you do the technique.
- Matching the inhale with the tensing and the exhale to the release.

TENSE / RELEASE MEDITATION FOR BODY RELAXATION

From Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati

2-4 minutes

1. Tense the muscles of the face, including forehead, cheeks, mouth, and upper neck. Then release with full awareness.
2. Gently roll the head from side to side, with awareness of the tightening muscles, and the feeling of release.
3. Tighten the shoulders, pulling them upwards and forwards. Then release.
4. Tense the entire right arm, from the shoulder down through the fingers. Do this without making a fist or lifting your arm off of the floor. Allow your attention to be deep inside the arm, not just on the surface. Then release slowly, with awareness.
5. Tense the left arm in the same way, and observe the release.
6. Gently tense the muscles of the chest and the abdomen, while continuing to breathe without holding the breath. Then release.
7. Tense and release the right hips and the buttocks.
8. Tense and release the right leg, down through the feet and toes in the same way that the right arm was tensed and released.
9. Tense and release the left hips and buttocks.
10. Tense and release the left leg.
11. While no longer tensing any muscles, allow your attention to drift back up through the legs, through the abdomen and chest, through the arms, and back to the face.

TENSION AND RELAXATION EXERCISE

From Paramahansa Yogananda

For this technique, think of the energy coming in through the moon center and bringing energy to the muscles as you tense them. As you release sense that you are releasing all that doesn't serve you and allowing the fresh new revitalizing prana to fill all your cells.

20 Major Body Part Patterning — *(Note: try to keep hands and face soft)*

1. Left Foot
2. Right Foot
3. Left Calf
4. Right Calf
5. Left Thigh
6. Right Thigh
7. Left Buttock
8. Right Buttock
9. Lower Abdomen
10. Upper Abdomen & Stomach
11. Left Forearm
12. Right Forearm
13. Left Upper Arm
14. Right Upper Arm
15. Left Chest
16. Right Chest
17. Left of Neck
18. Right of Neck
19. Front of Neck
20. Back of Neck
21. (Optional) Face and Scalp

Version 1: *less than one minute*

Tense all twenty body parts at once — release all at once.

Double exhale (keeping head to front) on release.

Version 2: *one or two minutes depending on how many you do*

Tense all body parts one after the other in a continuous progression till all are tensed.

Release in reverse order. Over time you will be able to tense all twenty parts in order with one inhale. And release all twenty parts in order with one exhale.