

Sometimes it is easy to get tense and not even realize it. This exercise will help us learn the difference between being tense and being relaxed and teach an easy way to relax.

To do this exercise, sit in a comfortable chair.

Now imagine that you are piece of cooked spaghetti. Tighten both your fists and arms, squeeze your legs and stomach and make your whole body as stiff as possible, so that you can't bend. Keep your whole body tense until you count to five. Now relax. Pretend that you are now a piece of cooked spaghetti. Let your whole body become loose and floppy. Let go of all of the tension in your body. Relax your shoulders and stomach, take a deep breath, and let your body be as loose and floppy as cooked spaghetti.

Which feels better, being cooked or uncooked spaghetti?

Now become raw spaghetti again. Squeeze all the muscles in your body until you are as stiff as raw spaghetti. Even make your face tense – squeeze all the muscles in your mouth and forehead. Squeeze your shoulders up to your ears. Make fists with your hands. Squeeze your eyes shut and push your feet into the floor. Hold your body stiff like raw spaghetti until the count of five. Now relax your whole body. Go floppy like raw spaghetti. Relax your face, your shoulders, your stomach, your arms and your legs.

Now which felt better, being cooked or uncooked spaghetti?

Become the raw spaghetti one last time and tense your whole body from head to toe. Make every part of your body as tense and stiff as you can until the count of five. Now relax your body like raw spaghetti.

It takes a lot of work to be as tense as raw spaghetti, and can make you feel tired to do this all day. When you notice that your body is feeling stiff or tense, don't forget that you can make yourself feel like cooked spaghetti by relaxing the muscles in your body.

RAG DOLLS AND ROBOTS



It is not easy to tell the difference between being relaxed and being tense.

Many of us can get so tense that we are as tight as a robot by the end of the day.

To show the difference between your muscles being tense or relaxed, sit in a comfortable chair and follow these instructions:

Imagine yourself becoming a robot, and tighten both of your fists and arms.

Hold the tension as you count from one to five.

When you get to five, drop your arms at your sides and go limp like a rag doll.

Notice how it feels when you are relaxed.

Which feels better? ROBOT RAG DOLL

Become a robot again.

Wrinkle your forehead and make the angriest face you can.

Now, press your head as far back as possible and bring your shoulders up to your ears.

Squeeze your eyes shut.

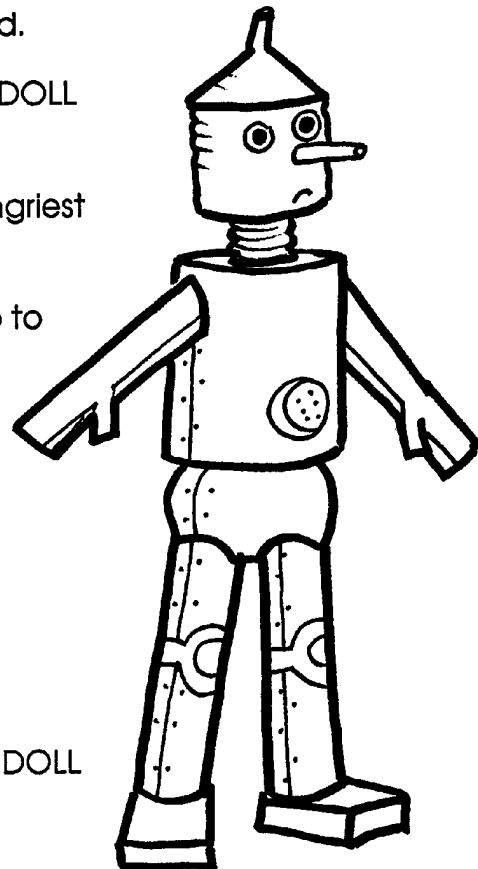
Press your tongue to the roof of your mouth.

Count from one to five holding the tension as hard as you can.

At five, drop the tension and go limp like a rag doll.

Notice the difference in how you feel.

Which feels better? ROBOT RAG DOLL



RAG DOLLS AND ROBOTS II

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Become the robot again and pull your feet and toes back toward your face.

Tighten your thighs and lock your knees.

Count from one to five holding the tension as hard as you can.

Drop all the tension in your body.

Go limp like a rag doll.

Notice the difference in how you feel.

Which feels better? __ ROBOT __ RAG DOLL

Become the robot one last time and tighten your entire body from head to toe.

Imagine you are made of steel.

Count from one to five.

At five, go limp like a rag doll.

Which feels more relaxing? __ ROBOT __ RAG DOLL

It takes a lot of energy to be a robot.

Can you see how good it feels just to go limp and relax like a rag doll?

This exercise lets you experience the benefits of letting your muscles relax. You feel better. Learning to relax can prevent backaches, headaches, and many other aches and reactions to stress. Use this exercise when your muscles feel tense, tired, or sore. Do this several times a week and you will notice how much better your body feels when it is relaxed.



BUBBLE BREATHS

Pretend you are in the bubble blowing championships. The one who blows the most bubbles in three breaths wins!



The best way to blow the most bubbles is to take a long, deep breath and slowly and gently exhale into the bubble wand.

Let's practice...

- ✓ As you count to 4 in your mind, breathe in slowly. Try to fill up your lungs with air all the way down to your belly button.
- ✓ Hold your breath for a count of 4 and get ready to blow those bubbles.
- ✓ Slowly and gently blow through the bubble wand. Try to exhale for a count of 4. How many bubbles did you make?
- ✓ Repeat these steps 2 more times.

You can use bubble breaths anytime you want, even if you don't have bubbles. Just imagine you are blowing bubbles as you take a slow breath in, hold it, and then breathe out as slowly as you can.

Practicing bubble breaths can help you feel better when you are mad, sad, or even scared. Keep practicing and you'll be the bubble-blowing champion in no time!

My Feel Better Plan

There are many things I can do to cope with feelings in ways that are helpful to me and do not hurt others.

I can talk to a trusted adult. Their name is _____.

Their phone number is _____.

Other people I can talk to are:

Teacher _____

Counselor _____

Friend _____

Family Member _____

My Feel Better Ideas



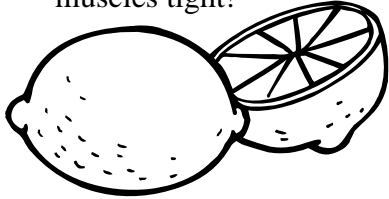






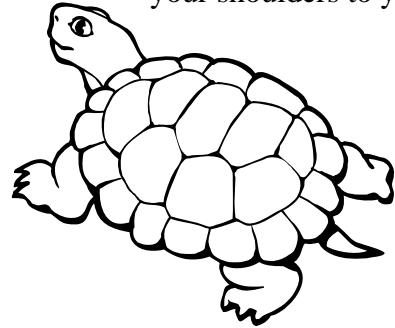
I CAN RELAX!

Squeeze lemons to make lemonade. Squeeze hand muscles tight!

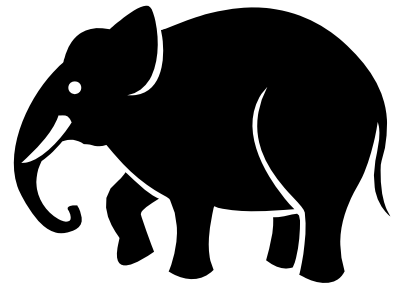


Squeeze your arm muscles like a strongman!

Tuck your head in your shell like a turtle. Try to touch your shoulders to your ears!



An elephant is stepping on your stomach! Make your stomach muscles hard!



Squeeze sand between your toes. Pick up your feet – here comes a wave!

S-t-r-e-t-c-h your mouth with a BIG yawn like a tiger.



There's a fly tickling your nose. Wrinkle



Pucker your mouth like you just ate a VERY sour lemon.