

Squeezing and Releasing Stress

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

Heart

Mind

Body

Breath

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



Similar to progressive muscle relaxation, squeezing and releasing stress is a practice that invites us to consciously tense up so that we might relax more completely.

This exercise is a technique you might use to release any stress you are experiencing in mind or body (typically, our stress is held in both).

PRACTICE:

1. Begin by finding a comfortable place where you can rest on your back for about ten to fifteen minutes. Let your arms rest by your sides and your feet to fall outwards as is natural. Take a few deep breaths to ground yourself.
2. Begin by drawing your attention to the soles of your feet. On your next inhalation, Clench your toes as if they were reaching for your heels, inviting any stress in this region to collect in the bottom of your feet. Let that inhalation be slow and steady.
3. As you exhale, slowly release all physical tension, inviting the mind to soften, too. Take a few mindful breaths to center yourself, noticing how it feels to let your feet rest completely.

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4. Shift your attention to the calves or thighs next, and in the same way, squeeze them in tightly on your next inhalation as if you are gathering knots of tension or stress here. Exhale slowly as you soften the legs completely, feeling into the experience deep relaxation. Take a few mindful breaths before moving on.

5. Repeat in the same way with any other body parts that you would like to consciously squeeze for a full inhalation. You might do this with the arms, the shoulders, the mouth, and the face in its entirety. Each time you breathe out, envision a deep release taking place, and make sure to take a few mindful breaths in-between each contraction.

**Note: If you have any health concerns in a particular area or any present discomfort or pain, avoid squeezing these areas. Mindfully breathe into them for a few cycles instead as you imagine the same release taking place but without the squeezing of them.*

6. When you are finished, imagine each part of your body surrendering into the surface beneath you for a final few moments of full release. If you'd like, you might invite an intention to release any residual thoughts that might be present for you.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What was this practice like for you? Were any areas of the body particularly pleasing to squeeze and release? Were there any areas that called for a gentler 'witness and release'?

2. How might you continue to release stress from the body as you move the day?