

This handout provides a simple yet effective tool for managing escalating emotions and refocusing attention. Regular practice can help both service providers and Veterans build confidence in their ability to navigate these tense situations and foster calmer, more constructive interactions.

### Progressive muscle relaxation

Trauma affects your fight/flight/freeze responses, known as the sympathetic nervous system. Deep breathing can be a very useful strategy to calm this response. Deep breathing activates the “rest” response, or the parasympathetic nervous system, which can signal to your body that you are safe. This is particularly true if you focus on a nice long out breath.

- 1 Pause and focus on your breathing.
- 2 Tense a muscle group (e.g. fists, shoulders or legs) for five seconds.
- 3 Release the tension and notice the sensation of relaxation.
- 4 Move to another muscle group, tensing for five seconds and then releasing.
- 5 Repeat with different areas of the body, working from head to toe or vice versa.
- 6 Repeat the process as often as necessary.

FIND MORE INFORMATION  
AND RESOURCES ON  
PROBLEMATIC ANGER:

[atlasveterans.ca/problematic-anger](https://atlasveterans.ca/problematic-anger)

