3. Tense each of the muscle groups for 10 seconds, then relax for 10 seconds, in the following order:

- Hands — clench your hands into fists, then relax
- Lower arms — bend your hands at the wrist, then relax
- Upper arms — bend your arms at the elbow then relax
- Shoulders — lift your shoulders up, then relax
- Neck — stretch your neck gently to the left, then forward, then to the right, then to the back in a slow rolling motion, then relax
- Forehead and scalp — raise your eyebrows, then relax
- Eyes — close your eyes tightly, then relax
- Jaw — clench your teeth, then relax
- Chest — breathe in deeply, then breathe out and relax
- Stomach — pull your tummy in, then relax
- Thighs — push your feet firmly into floor, then relax
- Calves — lift your toes off the ground, then relax
- Feet — gently curl your toes down, then relax

Relaxation works best when practised every day.
Introduction
Stress is an automatic reaction to danger and demand. The reactions to stress can include tensing of muscles, shallow and fast breathing, an increase in heart rate and a rise in blood pressure.

Everyone experiences stress. A certain amount of stress can be described as excitement, stimulation and enjoyment and can aid performing well. However, prolonged stress can harm your physical and mental wellbeing. That’s why you need to control stress.

Question: How stressed do you feel now on a scale from 1-10?
If you rate your stress at six or above, you may like to use some of the following strategies to lower this.

Stress and university
One way of managing stress is to take control of your study rather than letting it control you.

- Stress is a normal part of life. A certain level of stress helps you to improve performance. Find the balance that works for you
- Set study goals
- Work out a plan of the things you need to do to reach your goals
- Use a weekly detailed planner
- Let family and friends know about the demands on you so they can be supportive
- Learn to say ‘no’ to less important demands on your time

You can learn to manage stress!
Stress management skills can increase your physical and emotional wellbeing. You will have more energy and be more alert.

Quick stress reducers for everyday
Eat well
Maintaining a balanced diet will help your body absorb the nutrients to help you stay fit and healthy and boost your immune system.

Get plenty of exercise
Exercise brings pleasurable relaxation naturally. It is a great way to relieve physical and mental tension! Consider exercises that appeal to you, such as: walking, swimming, jogging, aerobics and yoga.

Relax
Print ‘R’ on a post-it note and stick it to mirrors, desk and the fridge to remind you to relax throughout your day.

Do something creative
Do something you really enjoy regularly that can help you to reduce stress. Creative activities lessen fatigue and refresh your mind, body and spirit.

Talk about your worries
Talk to a trusted person who may help to put problems in perspective.

Massage
Massage relaxes physical and mental tension. It can be combined with aromatherapy and can help with sleep and focus your concentration to study.

Visualisation
Soothe strained nerves by taking an imaginary trip to an ideal place. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and for the next 10 minutes, imagine yourself in any place you wish to be.

Deep breathing exercises
Proper breathing is one of the most effective techniques for reducing stress. Deep breathing assists relaxation by increasing the amount of oxygen in the body. It affects the tension in muscles and influences thoughts and feelings.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your back straight.
2. Rest your attention on your breathing as it comes in and leaves your nose. If your attention wanders gently bring it back to the breath.
3. Release any physical tension held in your face and body.

If you need any further information please visit the Counselling Service office on your campus.

Muscle relaxation exercises
1. Sit in a comfortable chair, with your feet flat on the floor, with your hands resting on your lap. Close your eyes
2. Focus for one minute on your breath as it comes and leaves the body