

Relaxation and Breathing Exercises

Relaxation techniques offer benefits such as reducing stress and tension in muscles, lowering blood pressure and heart rate, and creating coping skills to handle stress. Stress and anxiety can have a negative effect on the mental, physical, and emotional state of a person; for children and young people with additional support needs, this may result in them demonstrating distressed and challenging behaviours.

Practical Ideas/Strategies

- **Breathing and stretching exercises** – Support the area of your child’s body that require focus to tense and relax or stretch. You can use objects or visuals to support with breathing exercises (please see links below)
- **Provide soft furnishings** that will make your child feel comfortable, e.g. cushions on the floor, a dark den or pop up tent (you could create a make-shift den out of sheets and duvets!), etc.
- **Provide a form of focus for your child** to help them practice being mindful. This could include a bubble tube or lava lamp, blowing bubbles, using playdoh or Thera putty, listening to white noise or instrumental music, etc.
- **Provide massage regularly** – this could be in the form of deep pressure or hand, head or foot massage (with or without cream), use of a head massager or roller
- **Consider use of established coping mechanisms** that already work successfully, e.g. use of ear defenders, listening to music, watching favourite TV Programmes or YouTube videos, etc.
- **Create time in a space which is free from stimulation** – reduce all auditory and visual input where possible, e.g. turn off the TV and radio, close the windows and curtains etc.

TUMMY BREATHING.

When you slow down your breathing and breathe deeply from your tummy, you relax



This makes you feel calmer and helps your brain to keep thinking calm thoughts.



Here is what you can practise:

To work out if you are doing tummy breathing, put one hand on your chest and one hand on your tummy.

Now breathe.

Which hand is moving faster? If the hand on your chest is moving faster, you are breathing too quickly.

If the hand on your tummy is moving more quickly, you are taking nice, deep breaths that will help you to stay calm.

Tummy Breathing Exercise

1. Place one hand just above your tummy and the other on your chest,

2. Open your mouth and gently sigh, as if someone had just told you something really annoying. As you breathe out let your shoulders and the muscles of your upper body relax, down

3. Close your mouth and pause for a few seconds.

4. Keep your mouth closed and breathe in **slowly** through your nose by pushing out your tummy.

5. Now stop for 3 seconds.

6. Open your mouth. Breathe out through your mouth by pulling your



tummy in.

7. Pause.

Now do steps 4-7 for as many times as it takes for you to feel calm again.

You can also use the app [Breathe2Relax](#).

Other fun ways of practising tummy breathing...

Smell the strawberry....



Blow out the candle



Practise blowing bubbles



Feather Breathing



Collect different coloured feathers.

Ask your child to hold the feather in their hand.

Take a deep breath. (Model this for your child)

To help kids learn how to take a deep breath, ask them to put their hands on their bellies and feel the rise and fall.

Inhale slowly for a count of 3.

Then, slowly exhale through the nose and while exhaling blow gently up one side of the feather and down the other side.

Alternatively, place coloured feathers on a surface and see if the child or young person can blow on them and get them to move to the other side of the surface.



Five Finger breathing

Sit or stand comfortably with your back straight

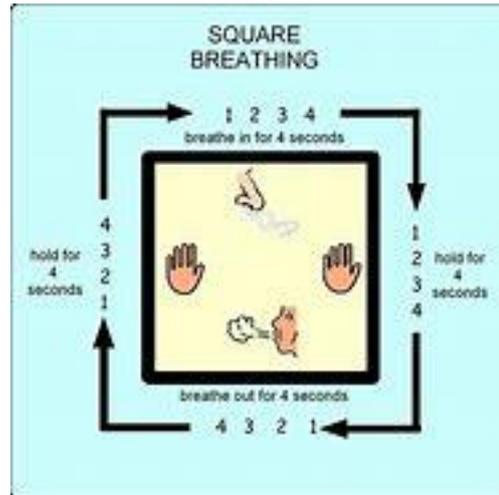
Open the palm of one hand wide

Now with the pointer finger of the opposite hand slowly trace your fingers while breathing.

Trace up on side of your thumb, 1, 2, 3, trace down the other side of your thumb, 1, 2, 3.

Repeat for all five fingers.

Shape breathing



Trace the edge of the square and count, 1, 2, 3, 4 ----- Pause

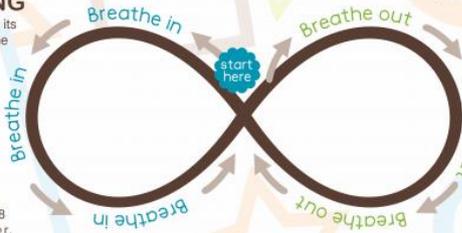
On the exhale trace the other side of the square, exhale for 1, 2, 3, 4 ----- Pause

Repeat on for the next half of the square.

Trace the square 3 times using this technique

LAZY 8 BREATHING

Start with an 8 on its side. Starting in the middle, go up to the left and trace the left part of the 8 with your finger while you breathe in. When you get to the middle of the 8 again, breathe out while you trace the right part of the 8 with your finger.



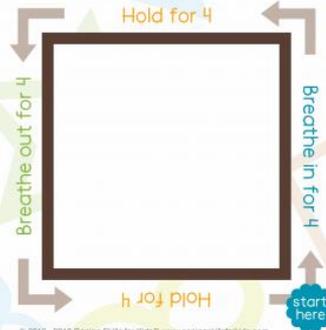
TRIANGLE BREATHING

Start at the bottom left of the triangle. Follow the sides around the whole triangle to complete one deep breath.



SQUARE BREATHING

Start at the bottom right of the square, and follow the arrows around the whole square to complete one deep breath.



STAR BREATHING

Start at any "Breathe in" side, hold your breath at the point, then breathe out. Keep going until you've gone around the whole star.



Online Resources / Videos

Calming Exercise for kids - Breathing and stretching:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyvuaL_2avY

Cbeebies. Techniques for keeping kids calm

: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/seven-techniques-for-helping-kids-keep-calm>

Calm Kids- Full body stretch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xELgfiXSw-s>

Children's relaxation activities: <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-wedo/emergency-response/coronavirus-outbreak/resources/easy-at-home-relaxationactivities-to-help-calm-kids>

Calm down activities: <https://www.thechaosandtheclutter.com/archives/13-effective-calm-down-activities-for-kids>

Sensory resources (Available to buy online for purchase):

<https://www.exploreyoursenses.co.uk/classroom-organisers/calming-relaxationsensory-resources.html>

Guide to home-made Sensory resources

<https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/homemade-sensory-kit-for-calm-down-time-and-fidgety-kids/>

Blowing bubbles to practise deep breathing

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=easy+tummy+breathing+for+children+bubbles&docid=608024690694817481&mid=D7FD43DC3581909B01C1D7FD43DC3581909B01C1&view=detail&FORM=VIRE&adlt=strict>