

# Relaxation Strategies for Children

## Relaxation Station

Develop a "Relaxation Station." within the house. This should be a consistent, calming spot where kids and adults alike can go to relax. Place some comforting pillows, hang a pretty curtain, and include calm, soft lighting. You might want to consider some calming music, nature sounds, rosewater or lavender scents, nature pictures, sweet smelling bean bags to cover the eyes, stress balls to squeeze, blankets, and a favorite stuffed toy.

When consistently used over time, the relaxation response will come automatically upon entering the space. Spend some time practicing relaxation activities in the space to further strengthen the relaxation response associated with it.

## Your Mind is Your Playdough!

Play with a ball of playdough and tell your child his/her mind is just like playdough - it can be stretched, changed, grow depending on what we tell it (how we manipulate it). Talk about the power we have to remind our brains to be calm. Practice good, happy thoughts (e.g. I am good at this, I can do this, I will have a good time, I choose how I feel, I remember to take a deep breath and squeeze my hands when I'm nervous) and for every negative thought remove a bit of playdough, transform it in shape and give it a more positive thought and return it to the bigger ball.

## Relaxation Rhyme

Pull your hands into very tight fists.

Ahh, let them go with a swish, swish, swish.

Squeeze tight, tight, tight with all your might.

Now just relax and make them light.

Curl your toes into a ball.

Now let them go, release them all.

Squeeze tight, tight, tight with all your might.

Now just relax and make them light.

# Cloud Garden Bedtime Game

This is a game that can be played by the whole family at bedtime to promote feelings of peace and relaxation. It is an excellent way to let go of anything during the day and ensuring a good nights sleep.

Arrange pillows in a circle to form your "cloud garden". Start with some gentle stretching to signal the body to begin to relax. Explain to children that this cloud garden is a place for all of us to relax at the end of the day. It is a place for peaceful voices and peaceful bodies. Sit on the pillow and give everyone a few cotton balls to hold. Each of your cotton balls represents something you would like to give to the cloud garden. This can be a special wish or affirmation related to bedtime such as "I am feeling light and soft like a fluffy cloud" or "I am ready for peaceful sleep." Or, if you have had a particularly challenging day, this can be thoughts or feelings you would like to release into the cloud garden in order to feel more relaxed and ready to sleep. Take turns releasing your cotton balls into the circle.

# Deep Breathing Check

After you have spent some time practicing deep breathing with your children, teach them this quick method to check in and see if they are chest or tummy breathing. While teaching deep breathing to children, deep, diaphragmatic breathing is often referred to as "tummy breathing." To do the check, instruct your child to put one hand on her chest, the other hand on her tummy. Take some slow deep breaths. If the hand on her chest is moving, then she is still taking shallow chest breaths and it's time to practice more tummy breaths. If the hand on her tummy is moving, then she is successfully engaging the diaphragm in deep breathing. Time to celebrate!!!

# Calm Body, Calm Mind

Children, like adults, respond differently to various forms of relaxation techniques and practice. What is the best relaxation activity for your child? The following are activities which work for children and adults:

- walking barefoot through grass or sand
- gardening - planting and watching things grow
- be creative - knitting, sewing , making cards
- jigsaws, puzzles

# Shake Out

For a quick energy shift-help your child to shake out their stress. Tell them that we are going to shake, shake, shake our bodies until all the tense energy is released into the space around us. Begin by simply allowing the body to shake in whatever way it feels comfortable. Let go everywhere. Pay attention to the energy moving through your body. Remember there is nothing to "do"-just relax and allow it to happen. The perfect amount of energy will be released. After you are done shaking, stop for a moment and check in with your body. Simply pay attention to the sensations and how you feel.

## Balloon Breathing

Find a comfortable position and close the eyes.

Start to think about the breath, become more aware of how you breathe in and out taking 3 deeper breaths.

Imagine a deflated balloon, it can be any colour you like perhaps the favourite colour or a colour you find relaxing. Pick up the balloon and put it to the mouth taking a deep breath in. Breathe out slowly imagining the balloon getting gradually bigger. Practice making the breath out longer than the breath in so that each time you breathe out the balloon gets bigger and bigger. As you do this imagine the balloon turns into a shape. It can be any shape you want but make it a shape that makes you happy. It might be an animal, an object or even a person. See the balloon getting bigger and bigger and feel the warmth and happiness that the shape and colour gives you. Continue to breathe deeply now keeping the balloon at a constant size but enjoy seeing the balloon dance around on the breath. Now imagine the balloon drifting away. Watch it dance on the breeze, move up and down and around as it drifts further away. As you watch it float away imagine it is taking all the worries with you leaving you feeling calm, relaxed and happy. Count to 5 slowly before you open the eyes.

## Happy Room

Find a comfortable position and close the eyes.

Start to think about the breath, become more aware of how you breathe in and out taking 3 deeper breaths.

Now imagine walking into a room which makes you feel really happy, calm and relaxed. Take a moment to look around the room. What things do you see? See everything really clearly in colour. What smells do you notice? What sounds do you hear? Take time to touch things. How do they feel? Walk around and explore the whole room and enjoy the sensation of feeling happy and calm. Choose a comfortable place to sit down and take a few moments to look around the room. Feel relaxed as you take in the room, all the sights, sounds and smells. Breathe in calm and breathe out stress and frustration. As you breathe out imagine the frustration and stress slipping out of the room leaving you feeling only happy and calm.

Take the attention back to the breathing and count to 5 slowly before you open the eyes.

## Diamond (Vajrasana)

1. Start in a kneeling position with the heels close together.
2. Let the legs become heavy on the mat and the spine awake and straight.
3. Breathe out and bring the hands together in prayer position.
4. Take five deep breathes imagining theself as a brilliant sparkling diamond.

### **Dormouse / child (Pindasana)**

1. Release the hands and gently fold over the legs with the forehead resting on the ground.
2. Be quiet and still like a little sleeping Dormouse.



### **Do Nothing Doll / corpse (Savasana)**

1. Roll onto the back and lie flat.
2. Make sure the spine is straight and look up at the ceiling.
3. Close the eyes.
4. Let the arms and legs flop onto the mat like a rag doll.
5. Feel the ground beneath you.
6. Imagine the mat/the floor is a piece of hot toast and you are a little ball of butter gently melting over the toast.



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