

# Relaxation Ideas for Kids

## 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.