

## Relaxation Activities

### **Breathing**

- Deep breathing can help a child to feel calm when they become angry or anxious.
- Get the child to place their hands on their tummy, below their ribs and breath slowly in and out, noticing how their chest moves in relation to their breathing.
- The breaths should be as slow as possible, without it becoming uncomfortable – try breathing in for 5 seconds through their nose, and then out for 5 seconds through their mouth.
- Having a focus on something can be useful when deep breathing

### **Breathing Buddy**

- Ask your child to choose a soft toy animal to be their “breathing buddy”
- Ask the child to lay down on their back with the toy on their tummy
- Tell the child to focus their attention on the rise and fall of the stuffed animal as they breathe in and out
- If you want, count “1, 2, 3” for each breath in and each breath out
- Ask the child:
  - Is your teddy moving up and down?
  - Can you feel the air moving in through your nose?
  - Can you feel the air moving out through your nose?
  - Does the air feel colder on the way in and warmer on the way out?
  - Can you hear your breath?
  - What does it sound like?



### **Pinwheel Breathing**

- Provide the child with a pinwheel template (available on the internet) and a paper straw  
*[http://www-tc.pbs.org/parents/curiousgeorge/activities/pdf/cc\\_pinwheel\\_bw.pdf](http://www-tc.pbs.org/parents/curiousgeorge/activities/pdf/cc_pinwheel_bw.pdf)*
- Note: could combine with mindfulness colouring by using a template with a colouring outline
- Ask children to colour their pinwheel template
- Cut along the lines
- Hole punch each of the four dots in the corners of the template
- Pinch the top of a paper straw together and cut a 1cm slit down the centre
- Stick a split pin into the slit in the paper straw
- Complete a breathing activity:
  - Breathe in slowly through your nose for 3 counts
  - Hold your breath for 2 counts
  - Breathe out slowly through your mouth for 3 counts
- As the child exhales their pinwheel will move and give them something to focus on, helping them to practice breathing skills





### **Hot chocolate breathing**

- Pretend you are holding a cup of hot chocolate
- Breathe in for 5 seconds through your nose, as though you are smelling the delicious chocolatey smell
- Then pretend to blow it cool, by breathing out for 5 seconds through your mouth
- Repeat this exercise four or five times until you feel relaxed

### **Balloon Breathing**

- Pretend you have a balloon inside your tummy
- Breathe in through your nose for 5 seconds, filling the balloon with air
- Then, breathe out for 5 seconds through your mouth to slowly let the air out
- Repeat this exercise four or five times until you feel relaxed

### **Bubble Breathing**

Give your child a cup and a straw half-filled with water.

Ask them to follow 3 steps:

- 1) Breathe in slowly through your nose for 3 counts.
- 2) Hold your breath for 2 counts.
- 3) Breathe out slowly through your mouth into the straw for 3 counts (making small bubbles).

This exercise helps to aid children to practise paying attention to their ability to deep breathe.

### **Star Breathing**

- Spread one hand out like a star
- Use the index finger on your other hand to trace the outline of your star hand
- Take a deep breath in through the nose as you move to the top of your thumb
- Breathe out through the mouth as you move down between your thumb and first finger
- Take another breath in as you move to the top of your first finger
- Breathe out as you move down between your first and second finger
- Repeat until you have taken five, slow deep breaths
- The video link below explains and demonstrates the technique:
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=sh79w9pn9Cg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=sh79w9pn9Cg)

### **Palming**

- Ask your child to rub their hands together to let them warm up for about 15 seconds
- Ask them to make a cup with their hands and place them over their eyes gently, not pressing their eyes with their hands
- Hold this position for 30 seconds to 2 minutes
- The more relaxed they become, the blacker the darkness they will see with closed eyes
- This exercise brings rest and relaxation to the eyes



### Helping others to feel good: Weather Massage

- Ask your child to think of times when a friend or family member was feeling upset
- Encourage them to think of ideas or anything they did or could have done to make them feel better
- This activity practices helping others to feel good and reinforces the concept of relaxation
- Tell the child that they are to pretend that they are outside and the weather keeps changing
- With your child take turns to be the “weather” who massages the “person outside”
  - N.B. You can create other stories and use different hand movements that fit with the stories
  - E.g. pretend you are making pizza on the other persons back or going for a bear hunt, there are many examples on the internet:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuQZ0LT5pvl>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58kZrjGGnDg>
- Once upon a time there was a big, yellow sun...
  - With one hand on the shoulder, take the other hand and make a circle clockwise on the back
- ...that warmed the whole world
  - Make “rays” to the sides
- But look, clouds appear and cover the sun
  - Make small circles with fingertips
- Then the wind comes, and blows harder... and harder...and harder
  - Stroke with hand from side to side, harder and harder
- ...until the wind turned into a tornado and hurricane
  - Make spiral with finger, starting in the centre of the back, getting bigger, harder and faster
- Then came the lightning
  - Make lightning bolt shape with finger
- ...And thunder
  - Clap hands on back gently
- Then came the rain...
  - Begin at shoulders and stroke down with fingertips
- And it rained harder, and harder
  - Same as above but harder and faster
- Until the rain turned into hail...and more hail
  - “play” with fingers on back... harder and harder
- Then it began to snow, and everything was white and beautiful
  - Pad clenched fists on back gently and slowly
- And the only thing to see was the cat that climbed up to the roof of the house
  - Climb hands up back towards neck
- Finally fog appeared
  - Swish hands round back
- Until the sun came out and warmed earth again
  - Make large circle with one hand on back





### **Glitter Bottles**

- Fill a water bottle with water and add a few teaspoons of glitter
- Shake it up and then watch the glitter settle to the bottom
- The glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. When you shake the bottle, the glitter whirls around and makes it hard to see clearly, when we are stressed or upset we also can't see clearly because our thoughts and feelings are getting in the way.
- When you let the bottle be still for a couple of moments the glitter starts to settle and the water clears, when we are calm for a little while our thoughts also settle and we see things much clearer allowing us to make sensible decisions and behave in a way that makes ourselves and others feel comfortable

### **Volcano Breathing**

- Stand up and put your hands in front of your body palm to palm
- Breathe in slowly through your nose and raise your arms up in pencil shape whilst bending your knees
- Then breathe out through your mouth whilst opening your arms to let the volcano out
- Then slowly lower your arms so they are by your side and straighten your legs
- Repeat this until you feel calm

### **Cotton Wool Blowing**

- Sit opposite your partner and cup your hands in front of you, with your palms facing up
- Place a piece of cotton wool in the palms of your hands
- Breathe in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth
- As you breathe out, pass the cotton wool over to your partners hands nice and gently
- Remember not to blow too hard or the cotton wool will not land nicely into your partners hand

### **Mirroring**

- Sit opposite the child and decide who is going to be the leader
- Both hold your hands out palms facing each other about 10 cm apart from each other
- The leader then moves their hands and arms slowly for their partner to follow and mirror
- Take slow deep breaths during this activity
- You can then repeat and swap who is the leader



### **Muscle Relaxation**

- Alternatively tightening and then relaxing muscle groups, to improve the child's awareness of their own body and how it feels different when they are relaxed, to when they are stressed.
- Progressively tighten the muscles of that body part, and then slowly relax them back to normal. Repeat four or five times.
- Practice this with which ever parts of the body the child says becomes tense when they feel angry or anxious, i.e. their fists and their tummy.

### **Guided imagery**

- Imagination is a great way to slow down your mind and help release any worries.
- Ask the child if they have good imagination? Then say, shall we practice?
- Let them close their eyes if they would like to.

Colour - Imagine your favourite colour, the colour that makes you feel peaceful and safe. Imagine taking in that colour with each breath and sending it throughout your entire body as you exhale. Continue this until you can see yourself being filled with your special relaxing colour.

Smell - Imagine your favourite smell, maybe a food you like or the smell of your favourite candle. Think of the smell that makes you feel peaceful and safe. Imagine taking in that smell with each breath and sending it throughout your entire body as you exhale. Continue this until you are filled with your special smell and you feel peaceful and relaxed.

Light - Imagine a light straight ahead of you. That's all you can see. Start with a bright light and as you breathe in it gets dimmer and dimmer until it's just a candle light. Then breath out, and slowly watch the light grow and become brighter and brighter again.



## **Mindfulness**

- Complete this full body mindfulness in about 5 minutes, going through each point slowly, giving them chance to focus on each body part.
- Ask the child to sit on a chair with their hands on their lap. Let the child close their eyes if they would like to.
- Start by asking the child to focus on their toes. Feel the pressure of the floor under their toes and focus on that feeling for a moment.
- Then move onto how their feet feel, slowly feeling the floor through their feet.
- Next, ask the child to focus on the feeling of their legs, moving up bit by bit until they are at their knees.
- Then, feel the pressure of them being sat on the chair. And how calm and comfortable their lower body feels.
- Move up to their tummies. Get the child to focus on how their tummy moves slowly out when they breath in and slowly in when they breath out. Get them to focus on their breathing pattern for a moment.
- Next, ask them to focus on the tips of their fingers. Right at the edges and how they are placed on their laps.
- Slowly move up their fingers, into their hands, feeling the light pressure of their hands on their laps.
- Then move up into their arms. Feeling how loose and relaxed their arms feel.
- Finally move up their shoulders and their neck, into their head.
- Ask them to focus on how there is no tension or pressure and their entire body feels relaxed.
- Let the child sit for a minute and feel all parts of their body together. Focus on how each part is connected to one another, and how they all feel calm.
- When the child is ready, ask them to open their eyes and come back in the room.