



Helpful Tips for Parents: Relaxation Techniques for Children

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Adapted from:

http://stress.lovetoknow.com/Top_Ten_Relaxation_Techniques_Children

www.yourfamilyclinic.com/adhd/relax.htm

<http://www.innerhealthstudio.com/relaxation-scripts.html>

There are many different techniques for relaxation and stress reduction for children. Depending on the child, certain techniques may work better than others.

- Deep breathing is an effective way of slowing down the body's natural response to stress. It slows down the heart rate, lowers blood pressure and gives the feeling of being in control. Simply breathe in deeply, hold the breath and release it slowly. Repeat the deep breathing until your child feels relaxed.
- Visualization uses your imagination to calm and relax your mind. Children should imagine their favorite calm, peaceful place or focus on beautiful places. Visualization slows down the chatter of the mind and helps ease worries. A great technique to use with a child involves imagining their favorite relaxing color. The color should be one that makes them feel peaceful and safe. Have the child imagine taking in the color with each breath and sending it throughout their body as they exhale until they are filled with their special beautiful, relaxing color. A soothing sound, a special aroma or the feeling of warmth or light can be used in place of the color.
- Exercise is a great form of relaxation. Walking, running and playing are all ways to exercise that children love.
- Listening to calming music helps to calm and focus the mind regardless of age. Work with your child to find the type of music they find soothing and relaxing and incorporate music into exercise and play.
- Stretching relaxes built up tension in the muscles. Teach your child how to stretch each muscle group and feel their muscles relax.
- Yoga and meditation relax the mind and body.
- Cuddle with a pet or a hug a loved one. The relaxation response is automatic when you cuddle or pet your dog or cat or give an unexpected hug to a loved one.
- Teach your child to take a break for the “business” of their every day life. Taking a break from the daily routine is very necessary when it comes to relaxation. The activity of relaxing is about switching off for some time of the day. When your child feels stressed,

ask him/her to take a break from work and rest for a while or engage in his/her hobby.

- Try using deep pressure massage on your child's hands or feet. This is particularly helpful for children learning to feel the difference between tight/stressed muscles and eased/relaxed muscles.
- Water has a calming affect for many children. Help your child find a special soap or bubble bath with a soothing aroma.
- Create a "safe" place. Work with your child to create a special place in your house they can go to relax. Fill the space with things your child finds comforting such as soft lighting, a special blanket or stuffed animal, quiet music, etc.
- Progressive muscle relaxation is a wonderful relaxation technique that is accomplished by tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups in your body. Try reading this script to your child:

Take a deep breath. Hold it for a second. Now exhale fully and completely. Again, take a deep breath. Fill your lungs and chest. Now release and exhale slowly. One more time, inhale slowly, hold, and release.

Now we are going to help your whole body relax. Let's start with your feet. Curl your toes up very tightly. Feel all the muscles in your feet become tighter and tighter. Hold it, and then let it go. Let your feet relax.

Again, curl your toes up very tightly. Feel all the muscles in your feet become tighter and tighter. Hold it, and then let it go. Let your feet relax.

Now let's relax your legs. Pretend you are running a very long race and using all the muscles in your legs. Tighten them as hard as you can. Hold it, and now let all that tension release. Take a deep breath and feel your legs relax.

Again, tighten all the muscles in your legs as hard as you can. Hold it, and now let all that tension release. Imagine your legs being so soft and relaxed that you could fall asleep.

Now tighten all the muscles in your stomach and chest. Take a deep breath and hold it. Feel all the muscles tighten in your chest. Let your breath go. Now notice how your chest and stomach relax.

Again, tighten all the muscles in your stomach and chest. Take a deep breath and hold it. Feel all the muscles tighten in your chest. Let your breath go.

Now let's relax your hands. Clench your fists very tightly. Pretend you have a lemon in each hand and you are squeezing all the juice out. Hold that tension. Now let go and relax your fists. Let your fingers unfold and let your hands completely relax.

Again, clench both your fists tightly. Squeeze all the juice from the lemons. Hold and release the tension. Imagine all your worries being released from your hands down to your fingertips.

Now let's relax your arms. Tighten all the muscles in your arms. Pretend you are carrying something very very heavy. Hold the tension and release it. Let the tension in your arms unfold and now let your arms fall to your sides.

Again, tighten your arms. Let the tension flow out of your arms. Replace all your stress with a relaxed feeling.

Now raise your shoulders toward your ears. Really tense your shoulders. Hold them up for a second. Gently drop your shoulders, and release all the tension. Take a nice deep breath.

Again, lift your shoulders, hold the tension, and release. Let the tension flow from your shoulders all the way down your arms to your fingers. Notice how different your muscles feel when they are relaxed.

Now take slow, deep breath and imagine all the muscles in your neck becoming very soft and relaxed. Let your head relax back into your (chair/bed/blanket/pillow) and let any tightness in your neck fall away.

Again, take a deep breath and imagine your neck and head becoming very relaxed.

Now, you are going to take 5 very slow and deep breaths. Take your time....breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Imagine your body becoming more and more relaxed each time you breathe.

Scan your whole body and if there are any places that are not relaxed, focus your mind on them. Take a deep breath and imagine a peaceful feeling going right to that tense spot. Keep scanning your body until each and every part is totally relaxed and peaceful.

When you are ready, slowly move your toes....then your legs....then your fingers and arms. Move your shoulders and gently turn your head. When you are ready, open your eyes. You are relaxed and peaceful.