



Relaxation Exercises

These exercises help to train Diaphragmatic Breathing and Progressive Muscle Relaxation techniques. These two techniques are among the most effective skills we can use to calm when experiencing heightened emotions. However, it takes a lot of practice before children can use these easily and naturally to self-calm.

- * Set aside 10-15 minutes a day to do these relaxation exercises with the young person; keeping to the same time and place most days
- * Before you begin, try to remove distractions from around the room and ask the young person to loosen tight clothes (like ties or shoes).
- * Before and after each of the exercises below ask the young person to breathe in deeply for 4 seconds, hold for 2 seconds, and exhale slowly for 6 seconds. This rhythm of breathing can set the pace for the exercises, and try to maintain slow breathing throughout.

The children who need this approach the most will likely struggle – reflecting why they need it. It's okay to shorten the session, even just to a few minutes. After practicing for a 2 weeks, when the child feels emotionally dysregulated (e.g. frustrated), coach them to use these techniques by calmly getting to their level and modelling to deeply breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 2 seconds, and exhale slowly for about 6 seconds. While doing so, tense while breathing in, and relax as much as possible while breathing out. Depending on the child and context, it can be helpful to put your hands over theirs while doing this.

Area	Exercise
Hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close your hands into fists. Then allow them to open slowly.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice the change from tension to relaxation in your hands and allow this change to continue further and further still so the muscles of your hands become more and more relaxed.
Arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bend your arms at the elbow and touch your shoulders with your hands. Then allow them to return to the resting position.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice your change from tension to relaxation in your arms and allow this change to continue further and further still so the muscles of your arms become more and more relaxed.
Shoulders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunch your shoulders up to your ears. Then allow them to return to the resting position.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice your change from tension to relaxation in your shoulders and allow this change to continue further and further still so the muscles of your shoulders become more and more relaxed.
Legs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point your toes downwards. Then allow them to return to the resting position.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice your change from tension to relaxation in the fronts of your legs and allow this change to continue further and further still so your muscles in the fronts of your legs become more and more relaxed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point your toes upwards. Then allow them to return to the resting position.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice your change from tension to relaxation in the backs of your legs and allow this change to continue further and further still so your muscles in the backs of your legs become more and more relaxed.



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Stomach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a deep breath and hold it for three seconds, tensing the muscles in your stomach as you do so. Then breathe out slowly.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice your change from tension to relaxation in your stomach muscles and allow this change to continue further and further still so your stomach muscles become more and more relaxed.
Face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clench your teeth tightly together. Then relax. Notice your change from tension to relaxation in your jaw and allow this change to continue further and further still so the muscles in your jaw become more and more relaxed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrinkle your nose up. Then relax. Notice your change from tension to relaxation in your muscles around the front of your face and allow this change to continue further and further still so the muscles of your face become more and more relaxed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shut your eyes tightly. Then relax. Notice your change from tension to relaxation in your muscles around your eyes and allow this change to continue further and further still so the muscles around your eyes become more and more relaxed.
All Over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now that you've done all your muscle exercises, check that all areas of your body are as relaxed as can be.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think of your <i>hands</i> and allow them to relax a little more.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think of your <i>arms</i> and allow them to relax a little more.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Think of your <i>shoulders / legs / stomach / face</i> and allow them to relax a little more.
Breathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathe in ...one...two..three....and out slowly..one..two..three..four...five...six ...and again
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathe in ...one...two..three....and out slowly..one..two..three..four...five...six ...and again
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathe in ...one...two..three....and out slowly..one..two..three..four...five...six
Visualising (to practice breathing to)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine you are lying on a beautiful sandy beach and you feel the sun warm your body.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a picture in your mind of the golden sand and the warm sun.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the sun warms your body you feel more and more relaxed. (say 3x)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sky is a clear, clear blue. Above you, you can see a small white cloud drifting away into the distance.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As it drifts away, you feel more and more relaxed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is drifting away and you feel more and more relaxed. (say 2x)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the sun warms your body you feel more and more relaxed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Wait for 30 seconds) When you are ready open your eyes ready to face the rest of the day relaxed and calm.