

Top Ten Relaxation Techniques for Children

Introduction

There are many techniques children can use to reduce their stress and relax. Try teaching your child one or two of the following techniques to help them relax during times of stress.



Deep Breathing

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 provides a feeling of being in control by bringing you into the present.

- Simply breathe in deeply through the nose.
- Hold the breath for a moment.
- Release it slowly through the mouth.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation offers a wonderful way to relieve stress and is often practised during Yoga relaxation. This is done by tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups in your body. It can be done lying down on your back, or standing.

- **Face:** scrunch up your nose and forehead then relax.
- **Jaws:** clench jaws together tightly and then let jaw go completely loose.
- **Arms and shoulders:** stretch your arms out in front of you, and then raise them above your head and stretch as high as you can. Next, drop your arms and let them hang loose.
- **Hands and arms:** imagine squeezing a ball as hard as you can in each hand and then dropping it on the floor and letting your hand go limp.
- **Stomach:** lie on your back and clench the stomach muscles as hard as you can for just a moment. Then release and relax.
- **Legs and feet:** pull up your knees and tense your toes, then release.



Exercise

Exercise is a great form of relaxation. Walking, running, swimming and playing all provide the kind of exercise that children love. Dancing and moving to music are also great ways to enjoy exercise together.



Visualisation

Visualisation is also known as visual guided imagery. This technique uses the imagination to slow down the chatter of the mind and help release negative thoughts and worries.

- First imagine a favourite colour or soothing sound, a special aroma, or the feeling of warmth or light.
- Imagine breathing in that colour or feeling, bringing peace throughout your body.



Laughter

Laughter is a wonderful stress reliever that soothes tension and helps the body relax.

Ways to encourage your child to laugh include:

- Telling jokes;
- Taking turns making silly faces;
- Watching a funny cartoon.



Stretch

Stretching relaxes built up tension in the muscles. Teach your child how to gently stretch each muscle group and feel the muscles relax.

Music

Listening to calming music can help a child regain focus. Even very young children may enjoy listening to relaxing classical music or the music of artists like Enya or Josh Groban.



Meditate

Yoga or meditation can relax the mind and body. Here is a simple meditation technique your child can use at home, but it works well in the classroom too.

- While your child sits on her bed at home, or at her desk before class begins, she should place her hands in her lap and close her eyes.
- The next step is to breathe in and out slowly and evenly.
- Each breath in and each breath out counts as a single count, and she should practice this even breathing for a count of at least 50 (try for at least 30 in the classroom).
- As she settles into the meditation, she should focus on listening to her breathing. As she does, she'll begin to feel more calm and focused.
- When she finishes her count of 50, she should take a very deep breath, let it out slowly, and then open her eyes.



Cuddle

Encourage your child to cuddle with a pet or to hug a loved one. The interaction can lower blood pressure and decrease stress hormones.



Toe Tensing

Toe tensing draws tension down from the rest of the body. This simple exercise should be repeated ten times each session.

- Lie on your back and allow yourself to sense your toes.
- Use your toe muscles to pull all ten toes back in the direction of your face and hold to the count of ten.
- Relax your toes and hold to the count of ten.



Practice These Techniques Together

Many of the techniques on this list are effective for individuals of any age. Do not hesitate to modify any of the techniques to make them age-appropriate for your child, and feel free to participate yourself. Reducing your own stress and relaxing more might just have a trickle-down effect for your child as well.