



Self-Calming Through Relaxation

How Can Relaxation Help My Child?

When children feel sad, worried, or upset, they may feel tense or agitated in their bodies. One way to help children change the way they feel emotionally is to help them change the way they feel physically. Relaxation training can improve mood because children are more positive and calm when they feel physically relaxed.



What Can My Child Do to Relax?

Alone or guided by instruction on the audio file provided by the therapist, your child can relax in three ways: 1) by taking deep, slow breaths, 2) by tensing and relaxing various muscles, and 3) by using his or her imagination to think about a peaceful scene. With practice, your child can learn to relax when he or she is feeling bad or after an upsetting event that has happened. This kind of self-calming through relaxation is a skill that can be used almost anywhere at any time!

1. **Deep, Slow Breathing.** Your child can take deep breaths – “breathing out stress, and breathing in calm.”
2. **Deep Muscle Relaxation.** Your child can tense and relax various muscle groups (hands, arms, shoulders, etc.) until most of the muscles in his or her body are relaxed.
3. **Picturing a Peaceful Scene.** Your child can imagine a calm, peaceful scene and hold that picture in mind while relaxing.

How Can I Help?

Learning to relax requires lots of practice! The first thing you can do is try to help your son or daughter find a quiet time and place to practise relaxation at home. If there are siblings, your child might choose to have them join in the practice, or he or she might need to find a private place and/or use headphones to practise relaxing alone with the recording. Second, when you see that your child is feeling bad, worried or tense, you can encourage him or her to practise using the relaxation skills – with or without the recording.



Finally, if you use relaxation skills in your own life, you might talk with your son or daughter about how relaxation skills help you calm down and feel better in certain situations (as a simple example, maybe it helps you to just take 3 deep breaths when you have to wait in a long line at the supermarket or you are late for an appointment).