

Breathing

Have the child sit before you in a comfortable position. *Then ask the child to breathe in slowly through his nose (with mouth closed) and breathe out slowly through his mouth.* As the child does so, encourage him to breathe deeply into his diaphragm (between the abdomen and chest and just below the rib cage). The child may need to push two fingers into his diaphragm to experience the sensation of a full, deep breath. The child can then breathe slowly out of his mouth. Parents may even join the process to help their child practice at home.

For younger children, I recommend creating an image during the breathing technique. A child could imagine blowing up a tire or pretend she is a large, floating balloon. As the child breathes in, she can imagine filling up with fuel and energy. As she breathes out, she can imagine losing fuel or energy (or tension). The child must come to understand the difference between feeling tense when lungs are full of air and feeling more relaxed after breathing out. The following breathing script may be helpful*:

Pretend you are a hot air balloon. When you breathe in, you are filling the balloon with air so it can go anywhere you want. Breathe in through your nose like this (show for your child). Breathe slowly and deeply – try to breathe in a lot of air! Now breathe out slowly through your mouth like air leaving a balloon. Count slowly in your head as you breathe out.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5. Let's try this again (practice at least 3 times).

*adapted from Kearney and Albano (2007).

Muscle relaxation

(Speaking slowly and in a low voice) Okay, sit down, try to relax, and close your eyes. Try to make your body droopy and floppy, like you are a wet towel. Take your right hand and squeeze it as hard as you can. Hold it tight! (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let go quickly. Good job. Let's do that again. Take your right hand and squeeze it as hard as you can. Hold it. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let go quickly. See how that feels. Nice and warm and loose. Now take your left hand and squeeze it as hard as you can. Hold it tight! (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let go quickly. Good job. Let's do that again. Take

your left hand and squeeze it as hard as you can. Hold it. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let go quickly. See how that feels. Nice and warm and loose.

Now shrug your shoulders hard and push them up to your ears. Make your shoulders really tight. Hold them there. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let go quickly. Great. Let's do that again. Shrug your shoulders hard and push them up to your ears. Make your shoulders really tight. Hold them there. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let go quickly. Great job.

Now scrunch up your face as much as you can. Make your face seem really small and tight. Now hold it there. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let your face go droopy. Good. Let's do that again. Scrunch up your face as much as you can. Make your face seem really small and tight. Now hold it there. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let your face go droopy. Good job.

Now I want you to bite down real hard with your teeth. Make your jaw really tight. Hold it there. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now open your jaw. How does that feel? Good. Let's try that again. Bite down real hard with your teeth. Make your jaw really tight. Hold it there. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now open your jaw. Try to make it as loose as you can. Good practicing!

Let's go to your stomach now. Bring in your stomach as much as you can – make it real tight! Press it against your backbone. Now hold it there. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let go quickly. That feels better. Let's try that again. Bring in your stomach as much as you can – make it real tight! Press it against your backbone. Now hold it there. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now let go quickly. Great job.

Okay, one more. Push your feet onto the floor real hard so your legs feel really tight. Push hard! Now hold it. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now relax your legs. Shake them a little. Let's try that again. Push your feet onto the floor real hard so your legs feel really tight. Push hard! Now hold it. (Wait 5-10 seconds). Now relax your legs. Shake them a little. Good practicing!

Now try to make your whole body really droopy – pretend you are a wet towel! Relax your whole body and see how nice that feels. You did a great job relaxing. Okay, open your eyes.

* adapted from Ollendick and Cerny (1981).