

Muscle Relaxation for Younger Children

NOTE TO PARENTS:

Breathing and relaxation techniques are effective for children and can help your child to relax quickly when faced with stressful situations.

Find a quiet room to practice the relaxation exercise. Encourage child to get comfortable, either by lying down or sitting in a chair.

Read the following script:

One way to help you go from the red back down to the green on the feeling thermometer is to use breathing and relaxation exercises. Counting to ten or taking a quick time out are different ways to calm down. In this exercise, you can practice how to relax your body, focusing on different muscle groups in the body.

Take several deep breaths.

In, 1 2 3, out 1, 2, 3.

If you want you can close your eyes and relax.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1,2,3

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

When you breathe in, bring the air all the way down into your tummy.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

You can put your hand on your tummy to make sure that you are breathing all the way down to your tummy. Your hand should move up and down as you breathe.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Keep breathing in slowly and breathing out slowly.

Feel your body starting to relax. Your eyes are feeling heavier and heavier as you keep breathing all the way into your tummy.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Keep your breathing slow and steady while you pay close attention to your feet. Pretend that you are standing on the beach with your feet in the water. You want your feet to sink deeper and deeper into the sand so push your feet down as hard as you possibly can. Look, here comes the wave, its washing over your feet. Push down, squeeze your toes. Push your feet and toes down into the sand. Now relax your feet.

Here comes another wave, it's even bigger than the first one. Now try one more time to push your feet into the sand as hard as you possibly can. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Now relax your feet.

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Now think about your legs. You are in line to get on a big/huge rollercoaster at the amusement park. You need to stand up as tall as you possibly can to be able to ride the rollercoaster. Here comes the lady to measure you and she needs to see if you can get on the ride. Stretch your legs as long as possible. Make your legs super long. Stretch, stretch, stretch. You are almost tall enough, but not quite there. The lady walked away.

Just Relax. Wait, the lady will give you another chance. She's going to re-measure you. Stand as tall as possible and stretch your legs. Keep stretching. Make your legs super long. Stretch. Keep stretching. Make them long. And relax.

Now we are going to think about your tummy. Here comes a fuzzy baby bear. He doesn't see you though and it looks like he is going to step right on your tummy. You have to make your tummy as hard as you possibly can to hold the bear up. Keep it really tight. Hold it. Okay, relax. The bear went away.

Wait! Here comes another bear. This one is bigger. A daddy bear. You have to tighten your stomach again. Keep it really tight. So tight it will hold up the bear. Tight. Tight. And relax. The bear went the other way so you can relax now.

Now we are going to work on our hands and arms. Pretend that you have two small oranges, one in each hand. You have to squeeze the oranges to make orange juice. To do this you are going to have to clench your fists as tight as possible. Start squeezing the oranges. Harder. Keep squeezing. Keep going. Squeeze harder. Feel juice pouring out of the oranges. Keep squeezing. Okay, there's no more juice left in the orange. Relax your hands.

We need more orange juice. Squeeze the new oranges as hard as you can. Make a fist and squeeze your hand as tight as you can. Some juice is coming out, keep squeezing. Good job. Keep going. Squeeze as tight as you can. Keep going, you can do it. Squeeze. Phew. We are done making orange juice. Relax your hands. Let all the tension leave your hands and arms.

Oh. Wow. Here comes a beautiful butterfly. He's coming over to you. He's flying around your head and, oh. He landed on your nose. Don't touch him with your hands, you might hurt him. Instead try to get him to move off of your nose by scrunching up your nose and face.

Squeeze your face up and move your nose around. Wrinkle your face up really hard. Now relax, he flew away. Feel the muscles in your face relax.

It did not work, the butterfly is still there. His wings are tickling your cheeks. You've got to try again. Wrinkle up your face again. Squeeze it as hard as you can. Squeeze. Wrinkle. Squeeze. Move your nose around. Ah.... that's much better, he went away. Relax your face.

Now just relax and focus on how your body feels. Your face was tight but now it's relaxed. Your fists were tight but now your hands feel open and free. Your stomach is nice and relaxed. Your legs and feet too. Your whole body feels relaxed. Whenever you feel your muscles get tight, you can pretend you are squeezing oranges or that a butterfly landed on your nose. This will help your whole body relax. You can open your eyes now, but stay relaxed. Calm and relaxed.