

Calming Techniques for Children

Calm Belly Breathing

Teaching children to focus on and control their breathing can help them become less reactive and more reflective when feeling anxious or stressed. If done every day at group time or when children are calm, it becomes a habit that they are more likely to use when stressed, frustrated, angry or upset.

Activity:

Sit down in a comfortable position, with your hands on your belly and fingers together.

Close your eyes or look down at your hands

Take calm slow breaths through your nose and feel your belly grow bigger moving your fingers away from each other.

Breathe out slowly through your mouth like you are breathing through a straw

Keep your shoulders down and relaxed, picture the air coming into your body and going out again

Repeat about 5 times

[Sesame Street Belly Breathing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq3DwzX6MUw) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq3DwzX6MUw>

Variations for Belly Breathing

Variations – Blow up a pretend balloon in your hands making your hands get further apart with each breath

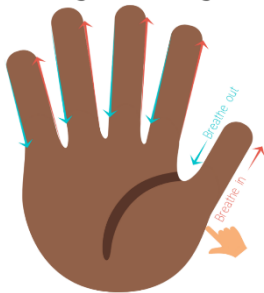
Pretend to blow out 5 candles , using your fingers as each candle.

Blow on a windmill

Blow bubbles

Pretend to breath in the aroma of your favourite hot cooked food and blow on it to make it cooler

5 Finger Breathing



Demonstrate using your hand, taking an in breath as you outline going up your thumb and fingers and breathing out as you come down.

Butterfly Hugs

Slowly tapping on both sides of the body. One hand at a time.

This promotes calm and also integration of left and right sides of brain.



Ear massage

The ear massage is a fantastic way to release endorphins in your brain and make you feel good, plus helps activate ears for listening and short term memory.

Activity

Start by gently rubbing your earlobes with your thumb and index finger. Then squeeze the outer edges of your ears all the way to the top. These parts of your ears have tiny reflex points that can relax specific areas of your body. Finish by using your index fingers and middle fingers to massage behind the ears on the bony part of your skull.



Calming points

These points are on the Triple Warmer meridian line and help calm the sympathetic nervous system down.

Activity



Exercise

It is important to build in time for active exercise and relaxation during the course of the day. Exercise uses up the left over adrenalin and cortisol in our body that is released during stress.



Relaxation

Relaxation such as; simply resting, mindfulness, massage, progressive relaxation, visualisation, Tai Chi or yoga helps us to be and keep calm. They retrain the brain.

Massage

Give the children a regular full body or face massage (grape seed oil is good for this as it tends to be Ok with allergies and sensitivities). Children can give each other a back massage using massage tools.

Progressive relaxation

“Feel your whole body resting on the floor, try to keep your hands and feet very still. Breath in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Now take your awareness to your feet, feel your feet on the floor, feel your toes. Now slowly scrunch up your toes, like your scrunching paper. Scrunch as much as you can. Now slowly let them relax back into the floor.

•Do this with, legs, hands, arms, bottom, stomach, shoulders, face and whole body

Pretend Shampoo

Teacher squeezes a dab of shampoo from an imaginary bottle into each child’s hand. Children pretend to wash their hair and massage their scalp.



Massage Circle

Children sit in a circle. Everyone turns to the right so that each child is facing their neighbours back. Each child kneads, rubs and pats the back in front of them while receiving the same treatment from the child behind them.



Mindfulness activities

Mindfulness exercises often involve paying attention to a single focus, such as the breath or a simple object. This can improve children’s concentration and reduce distractibility, which in turn can help them stay calm and composed.

Listening: Find things that have different sounds i.e. keys, bell, shaker, whistle etc, children match the sound to a picture, Sound lotto, listen to sounds from outside, listen to a story created only by sounds.

Seeing: Finding different things around the room ie, shapes, colours, I spy books, Where's Wally, Laying on back outside looking at cloud pictures

Smell: Matching smells, cooking experiences that incorporate new smells, flowers in the room, scratch and sniff.

Taste: Matching the taste of foods with a picture of the item, cooking experiences

Movement: Putting hands on belly when breathing, paying attention to stomach going in and out. Listening to heart beat with stethoscope or hands after exercise and when calm.. Moving fast and slow to different music or rhythms. Balancing and spinning activities

Things to observe, look at, feel.

- Leaves,
- Pinecones
- Feathers
- Tissues
- Cotton balls
- Flowers
- Crystals
- Marbles
- Their hand
- Looking into mirror
- Stones
- Bark



Ideas for Calming Box

- Stress balls
- Hourglass
- Snow globe, sensory bottles
- Bubble toys
- Playdough – scented
- Lavender cotton balls
- Pinwheel
- Fidget toys
- Bubble wrap
- Crayons or pencils and paper
- How do you feel today poster or cards
- Hand model for deep breathing



Visual Cues

Make visual cue cards of quick calming activities that children can choose from when they are feeling angry, stressed or overwhelmed.



Ideas for calming sensory experiences

- Finger paint
- Playdough
- Goop
- Slime
- Water
- Sand
- Stones
- Seeds



Sand Tray Play

Trauma can be difficult for children to express through words alone. Sand tray play allows them to use sand, miniature figures, and other materials to create scenes that represent their feelings, experiences, and thoughts.



Ideas for Sand Tray Play

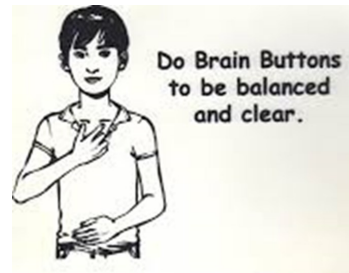
- Dolls, family figures
- Cars
- Furniture
- Fairies
- Monsters
- Animals
- Super Heroes
- Houses
- Anything you can think of and find.

Brain Buttons

Massaging these areas facilitates sending of messages from the right brain hemisphere to the left side of the body, and vice versa. Plus stimulates the carotid artery increasing blood supply to the brain.

Activity

The brain buttons (soft tissue under the clavicle to the left and right of the sternum) are massaged deeply with one hand while holding the navel with the other

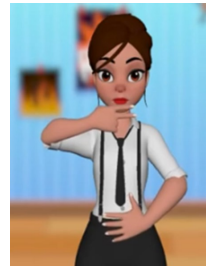


Earth Buttons

This helps activate the brain for centering and grounding and relaxation of the central nervous system. Also helps depth perception and visual cortex.

Activity

Put thumb on the chin below the bottom lip and index finger above the top lip. Rub these back and forth while holding the belly button. Then swap hands.



Cross Crawl

A cross lateral movement, activates development of the corpus callosum (the nerve pathways between the two hemispheres of the brain). This gets both sides of the body working together, so information can pass more freely from one side to the other. It is simply a cross lateral walking in place and can be done using a lots of variations.

Activity

Touch the right knee with the left hand and then the left knee with the right hand.

Touch the right elbow to the left knee and then the left elbow to the right knee.

Cross crawl as you sit moving opposite arm and leg together.

Reach behind the body to touch the opposite foot.

Do cross crawl with a variety of music and rhythms

With babies hold one hand and the opposite foot and bring together while singing nursery rhyme. This can be done after changing nappy

Use colour coded stickers or ribbons on opposite hands and feet for children who may need help.

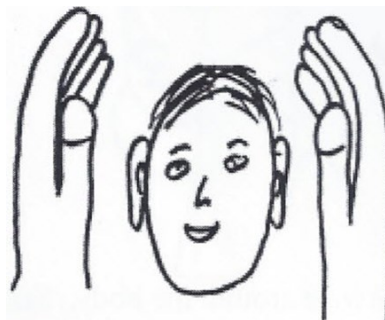


Energy to Ears

Helps to settle incoming auditory stimulus coming into the RAS

Activity

Place hands close to the ears. Hold them there, feel the warmth and energy. Hold for a minute or two. You can do this for yourself or another person



Hook Ups

Hook-ups connect the electrical circuits in the body, containing and thus focusing both attention and disorganised energy. The mind and body relax as energy circulates through areas of blocked tension.

Activity

Sitting, cross the left ankle over right.

Extend arms out in front, crossing the left wrist over right

Interlace fingers and draw hands up toward chest

Close eyes and breath deeply and relax



Energy yawn

The mouth and jaw has the most amount of muscles in our body and is the first part that our body locks down when we perceive threat (stress). We hold a lot of tension in our jaw but it is very important that this works properly to aid our digestion.

Activity

Massage the areas covering the upper and lower back molars while making a deep relaxed yawn sound.



Calf Pump

Under stress our calf muscles become tight and shorten to enable us to quickly flee or fight. This action also locks down the knees, lower back and neck and decreases the natural flow of cerebral spinal fluid around the brain.

Activity

Stand and support yourself with hands on a wall or back of a chair. Place one leg behind and lean forward, bending the knee of the forward leg. Ensure that straight leg and back are on one plane.

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Bean Bag Activities

Head Drop

This helps relieve tension in the spinal cord and helps to focus

Activity

Place beanbag on top of head. Tilt head forward so the bean bag drops. Catch bean bag as it falls toward the navel. Do this to the back also by tilting the head backward and catching behind the back



Waves

Helps focus attention on the present moment, calming and integrating both hemispheres of the brain.

Activity

Both hands commence at navel. One hand takes the beanbag on a journey. It travels down and out, up and around to above head, and straight down the midline to give it to the other hand at the navel. Same movement on the other side.

Song: The waves come in
The waves go out
All around and all about



Heart 8s

Promotes focussed attention, calming, centring and crossing the midline.

Activity

Vertical infinity sign sweeps in the air, with the heart chakra as the central cross over point. Always begin in the middle going up and out.

Song: Up and around and down and in
Swap hands, swap hands (repeat)



Round and round my tummy

Activity

Bean bag circles the body below hip level. Swap hands at the midline and go clockwise and counter clockwise for a few rotations each. Always finish in a clockwise direction.

Song: Beanbag beanbag, Beanbag goes around X2

Round and round my tummy x2
Beanbag beanbag, Beanbag goes around



Twirly Whirly Jiggling Bags

Helps develop the RAS sensitivity to auditory and visual stimulus

Activity

Jiggle a beanbag around your head at ear and eye level. Shake at the same time to make sound. Keep your eyes focused in front but be aware of the beanbag going into the peripheral vision.



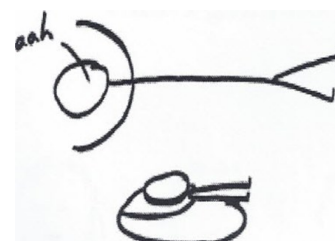
Eagle and Rabbit

Helps integrate the Moro Reflex, which if not integrated predisposes a person to be more stressed and anxious

Activity

Child stretches out with legs and arms to the side, then crawls up in a ball drawing their legs up and arms over legs, giving themselves a big hug. You can tell the story.

Rabbit is lying outstretched, feeling the sun warming his tummy. Eagle flies in looking for some breakfast. Rabbit quickly tucks himself into a ball. Eagle can't get to his breakfast, he won't be having rabbit today and flies off. Rabbit stretches out again, lying in the sun.. Repeat many times



Spin on your Bottom

Helps to increase the pumping action of the Dura Mata and therefore the blood around the brain.

Activity

Children sitting on the floor, get them to spin, rock and roll on their bottom

Song; Spin on your bottom, spin on your bottom,
Spin on your bottom on the floor

Repeat.

Do the same for rock and roll on your bottom

Variation: balance bean bag on your head

Conductor

Prop Recording of classical music

Activity

Each child gets a pencil (not sharp to avoid someone getting it in the eye). Children stand, hold their pencil in one hand, close their eyes and conduct the orchestra, which is playing quiet classical music.



Singing and Rhythmic Activities

These also help calm the body through activating the Ventral Vagus System.

As does humming



Yoga and Tai Chi

Yoga

<https://www.kidsyogastories.com>

Cosmic Kids Yoga

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhYtcadR9nw>

Vestibular activities

Vestibular activities such as rocking and swinging are very powerful for self-soothing and focusing attention.

- Rocking chairs
- Wobble stools
- Yoga balls for sitting on, standing on, laying on
- Trampolines
- Sensory cushions to sit on or stand on
- Wobble disks to sit on or stand on
- Variety of swings
- Hammock
- Swinging in a sheet.

