

Calming Ideas for All Ages

~ Christine Linnehan, LCPC, BC-DMT, FT

Relaxed Body

Stretch your arms up over your head and down again

Push/Press your hands together and count to 3

Rub your thighs and count to 3

Take a long deep breath

If You Need A Break Try The 4 B's, Kornblum (2003)



Brakes: Reach up and pull your arms (vigorously) toward your body and "catch the energy")

Breathe: Release and stretch your arms overhead while taking a breath in

Brain: Exhale and gently place your hands on your head (you can say "I am relaxed" or "I feel calm")

Body: Lower your hands and place them over your heart. Feel your body calm down.

Calming Ideas For Young Children:

* Breathe in like smelling a flower, out like blowing a bubble or a candle

* Breathe in and make your body tight like a piece of spaghetti; breathe out and make your body all loose and floppy like cooked spaghetti

***Visualization:** To visualize, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Picture the image in your mind as if you are playing a video of it in your mind. Examples:

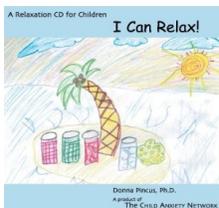
***Freeze/Melt:** Imagine you are frozen, standing alone in the morning sun. As the day heats up, you feel yourself melting bit by bit. First your head starts to melt, then your body, slowly and gradually—drip, drip, drip. As you melt, feel yourself becoming warmer and more relaxed.

***Cloud:** Picture yourself on a fluffy, white cloud that feels like the softest bed in the world. As you float by in the big blue sky, your worries drift away in the wind, one by one. Watch them disappear into the blue.

***Toy shop**—toys come alive at sound of bell/drum (various types of movement)

***Ocean:** Imagine the deep, blue ocean. You are a wave in the rolling sea, gently moving up and down. Feel the motion; let it relax you. Hear the sound of the waves in your mind and imagine that they are carrying your worries away.

Option: Use art, writing, movement, drama to show your image.



I Can Relax, A Relaxation CD for Children, Donna Pincus, Ph.D

Making a Mind Jar (Calming Jar): www.herewearetogether.com/2011/06/27/

Meditation Books for Children, Parents, and Teachers, www.kerryleemacleanauthor.com

Relaxation/Guided Imagery (tweens/teens/adults)

~ Christine Linnehan, LCPC, BC-DMT, FT

This is a gift of time you give to yourself, a time for your own self-care.

* The simple act of breathing changes your physical body. By breathing in peace, calm, and comfort, you release tension, stress and/or worry. This is welcome relief to our bodies.

* As you focus on your breath, pay attention to how your body relaxes ... softens ... opens ... fills with peace. Notice your breathing: is it fast, slow, deep, shallow...

*Begin to let your breathing become deeper and slower; Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth: Breathe in slowly with three counts - one ... two ... three. Breathe out slowly with three counts - one ... two ... three.

*This will help you focus and get quiet. This exercise takes a couple of minutes and can completely relax, calm and center you. This is a great exercise to do when you are feeling stressed; or when you are feeling overwhelmed.

As you exhale, breathe out tension; as you inhale, breathe in peace

As you exhale, breathe out stress, as you inhale, breathe in calm

As you exhale, breathe out worry; as you inhale, breathe in comfort

Breathe deeply and slowly; become aware of your body

Breathe calm into your body; breathe peace into your body;

Allow your body to soften and relax as you breathe

Feel your whole body relax, filling with peace.

*As you continue to breathe, imagine what you want to take in for yourself as you inhale and what you may want to release as you exhale.

*As you continue to breathe, imagine a soothing person, place, or thing that brings comfort to you. Breathe in the comfort of this image.

Ending the relaxation:

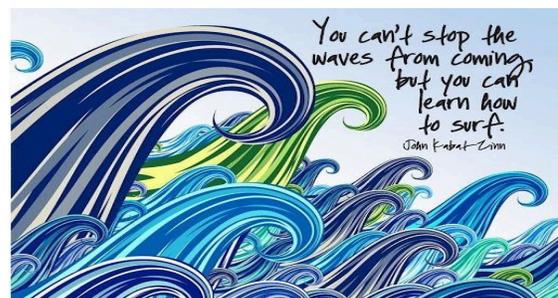
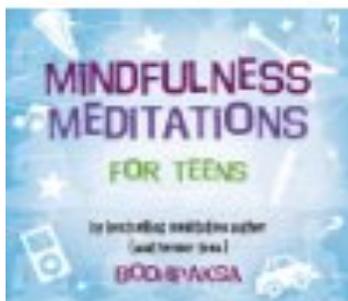
*Gradually begin to be aware of your surroundings—feel your feet on the ground and, if your eyes are closed, slowly open them. Take a moment to pay attention to how you are feeling and what that was like for you.

*Contemplate these different meanings: breathe easy, breathe easier, breathe easily, and breathe freely.

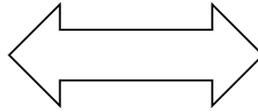
* Process: What was this like for you? What will you take with you?

Peaceful Place (Guided Imagery): Think about an environment in which you feel calm, safe, and peaceful; a place you would most like to be if you could be anywhere you choose, real or imaginary. It might be a special room in your home, at the beach, a favorite café. Imagine this as a place where you feel connected; a place where you can be yourself. Take a few moments to visually see the place and take it in. What are the colors? Take in the colors. What are the sounds? Pause and listen to the sounds. Where do you see yourself in that space and what are you doing. What are important things in that environment?

Option: Use art, writing, movement, drama to show your peaceful place.



Meditations for Teens, Bodhipaksa (2011)



Promoting Self-Regulation through Movement: Exploring Polarities (tension/relaxation)

~ Christine Linnehan, M.S. , LCPC, BC-DMT, FT

Lead child (children) through movement experiences involving degrees of tension and relaxation.

Themes:

Sudden tension-----Gradual tension
Gradual tension-----Sudden relaxation
Forceful-----Forceless
Active-----Passive
Contract-----Expand

Stimulus words:

Tension: tight, stiff, rigid, anxious, nervous, hard
Relaxation: loose, floppy, flowing, smooth, soft

Props

Scarves, stretchy fabric (lycra/spandex), drum and other instruments, puppets, feathers, music with a variety of rhythms (e.g. young children: *Bop Til You Drop* by Greg and Steve—FUN!)

Yoga: Centering Poses

With balance poses, you use focal points to help you be calm and steady. You can choose a spot on the wall in front of you. It should be something that you can view clearly without distraction from others in the room. Even with a visual focal point, it can still be challenging to keep our minds still. Try a mental focal point as well. Allow your mind to focus on one word while you're balancing. It should be a good word—something that makes you feel calm. You choose your word and allow both your mind and body to be focused, calm, and steady.

Example: *tree pose*

- Stand, feet together; find something on the floor two feet in front of you to focus on
- Extend your arms at shoulder height out to the side (wide center of gravity makes this the easiest arm position for balancing)
- Lift the right foot, turning the knee out; place the right foot above or below the knee
- Imagine your toes are the roots grounding into the earth: your standing leg is the trunk, strong and tall, your arms & bent leg are branches reaching outward and upward toward the sun

More Resources:

The Moon Balloon Project: <http://www.themoonballoonproject.org/> (stress balloon activity works great)

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Activities for Kids and Their Parents, Eline Snel

Cobra in the Classroom, Abby Willis (2013), <http://www.resilientkids.org/research/>

I Can Relax, A Relaxation CD for Children, Donna Pincus, Ph.D

Activities to Support Self-Regulation (For Littles/Middles)

Jamie Schwellenbach, Lesley University (Dance/Movement Therapy student)

Milkshake - Popsicle - Melt

This is a great activity to help bring children from high energy to lower energy, it can be especially helpful during transitions.

1. Milkshake: Using pantomime, begin by “gathering” all of the big energy, fast energy, high energy, and putting it into a blender, pushing the button to make a milkshake (wiggle and shake the body all around with all of this energy)...
2. Popsicle: Then the milkshake gets put into the freezer, where it gets colder and colder (slow the movements down, beginning to bring the limbs in - eventually hugging self as though you are cold), until it freezes solid (either wrapping arms around body, or bringing them straight down at your sides, freeze) like a popsicle.
3. Melt: Here you can take an optional deep breath in, tensing all muscles tightly before the release, or just go straight into the ‘freezer door’ opening (or the sun coming out), melting the popsicle - as muscles relax, release, and the energy (and sometimes the physical body too!) melts to the floor. Once in this relaxed state it can be beneficial to take a few deep inhales and exhales, and the story can be continued if necessary...

*This can also be done as a snow globe (in the winter!)

Shake the snow globe (your body)...

As the snow falls it gets colder and colder - and more and more peaceful (energy and movement slows to stop)... until all the snow has settled and you are still, watching it, soaking in the peace and quiet...

Quietly walking through it leaving silent footsteps in the snow (assuming transition).

Caterpillar - Butterfly - Breath

1. Imagine that you are a caterpillar who just needs some time all to yourself, so you build yourself a nice, soothing, cozy cocoon and snuggle up inside.
(Here you can add breath, rolling on the floor, rocking, tense and release muscles...)
2. Inside the cocoon the caterpillar slowly becomes a butterfly and eventually is ready to push its way out into the world again...
(Here you can stretch in all directions, pushing the cocoon aside).
3. Once ‘free’ from the cocoon, the butterfly sits nice and tall and spreads its bottom wings
(Sitting with soles of feet together (butterfly stretch), bounce knees/legs up and down and ‘flapping’ wings.
4. Inhale and reach the arms up over the head, bring them down to rest on your shoulders (elbows out to the sides) for ‘double butterfly’, with both sets of wings
(arms and legs) flapping.
5. Inhale, reach arms up again,
Exhale, bring hands down on the top of your head making ‘antennae’,
6. Inhale through the nose, sitting up nice and tall, ‘smelling the flower in front of you’...
Exhale through the mouth blowing out all your air as you bend forward to ‘sip the nectar from your flower’...
7. Inhale again through your nose ‘smelling the flower’ as you come back up to straight spine...
sitting nice and tall
Exhale through mouth as you bend down to sip nectar... repeat at least three times.