

For Older Children and Teens: Belly Breathing

Since calm breathing involves taking slow, controlled breaths from the diaphragm, another way to explain this technique is to present it as "belly breathing". The steps for this exercise are as follows:

Breathe in slowly for 4 seconds through the nose.

Ask your child to pretend that they are blowing up a balloon in the belly, so your child's belly should inflate when breathing in.

Wait 2 seconds, and then slowly breathe out through the mouth.

Ask your child to pretend that they are emptying the balloon of air, so the tummy should go down (deflate).

Wait 2 seconds, and then repeat.

Helpful Hint: When belly breathing, make sure your child's upper body (shoulders and chest area) is fairly relaxed and still. Only the belly should be moving!

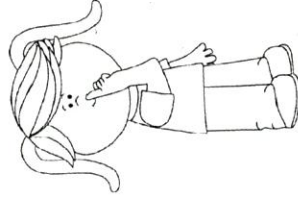
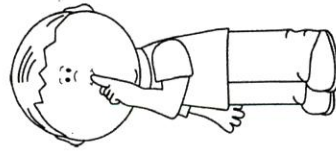
NHS

How to Teach Your Child Calm Breathing

Calm breathing is a technique that teaches your child to slow down their breathing when feeling stressed or anxious.

Why is calm breathing important?

When your child is feeling anxious, their breathing will change. When we are anxious, we tend to take short, quick, shallow breaths. This type of anxious breathing can actually make the feeling of anxiety worse! Doing calm breathing can help lower your child's anxiety, and give them a sense of control. Calm breathing can be used by your child when they are feeling anxious, especially in situations when you are not there to help them through it.



How to do it

Step 1: Explaining calm breathing to your child

This can be used anywhere, anytime by your child! Other people will probably not even notice when your child is doing it. For older children and teens, explain that taking short quick breaths actually increases other feelings of anxiety (e.g. heart racing, dizziness, or headaches). Calm breathing will slow down their breathing.

Step 2: Teaching the calm breathing technique

Take a slow breath in through the nose (for about 4 seconds)

Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds

Breathe out slowly through the mouth (over about 4 seconds)

Wait 2-3 seconds before taking another breath (5-7 seconds for teenagers)

Repeat for at least 5 to 10 breaths

Step 3: Practice, practice, practice!

In order for your child to be able to use this effectively, they need to become **an expert** at calm breathing.

The only way to become an expert is to practice this skill every day!

Rules of practice:

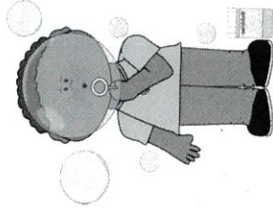
Until your child is comfortable with this skill, they should practice it at least twice a day, doing 10 calm breaths in a row.

When you are practicing calm breathing, start when your child is relaxed, before he or she is feeling anxious. Your child needs to be comfortable breathing this way when feeling calm!

Once your child is comfortable with this technique, they can start using it in situations that cause anxiety.

Calm Breathing for Younger Children: Bubble Blowing

A fun way to teach your younger child how to do calm breathing is the "bubble blowing" technique. Using a toy soap bubble container and wand, have your child practice blowing bubbles. The breathing required for blowing soap bubbles is the same as what is used for calm breathing. Simply make sure your child waits a second or two before blowing another bubble. Then practice "blowing bubbles" without a bubble wand.



Important Hint:

Although "bubble blowing" is a great way to practice calm breathing, it is important to remind your child that they are learning how to breathe calmly. In other words, do not simply ask your child to blow bubbles without explaining this is used to help to manage anxiety.