



Companion Guide

A Simple Breathing Practice

Try This at Home

Time needed: Less than 1 minute

This guide accompanies the article **When Big Feelings Take Over**.

If there is one practical tool I return to again and again, it's breathing.

This simple breathing practice was shared with me by my clinical supervisor and has become one of the simplest tools I return to in both parenting and counselling.

Like a fire drill, breathing is most helpful when we practise before we need it.

Why Breathing Helps

When we're overwhelmed, our breathing often changes without us even noticing. We may hold our breath, breathe more shallowly, or start breathing faster.

A slow, relaxed exhale helps restore the body's natural balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide, allowing the nervous system to begin settling.

We don't breathe this way to make emotions disappear.

We breathe this way because it's easier to think, listen, ask good questions, and respond in the way we hope to when our body feels safe.

The Practice

Step 1

Take **three normal breaths**.

Don't change anything.

Don't force anything.

Simply notice your breathing.

Step 2

Take **three deeper, longer breaths**.

Whatever feels most comfortable.

There's no counting.

No need to take the biggest breath possible.

Just breathe a little deeper and let the exhale last a little longer than it normally would.

Then allow your breathing to return to its natural rhythm.

The whole exercise takes less than a minute.

Practise Before You Need It

Like a fire drill, breathing is something we practise before we need it.

You might try it together:

- Before school
- Before homework
- Before bed
- In the car
- After sports
- Before a difficult conversation

The goal isn't to become perfectly calm.

The goal is to make the practice familiar, so it's easier to return to when emotions begin running high.

If Your Child Doesn't Want To

That's okay.

Rather than asking your child to breathe, try breathing yourself.

Children learn a great deal from watching us.

Sometimes simply seeing an adult pause, take a few slow breaths, and return with a calmer presence teaches more than any explanation.

A Gentle Reminder

This doesn't have to be perfect.

Three ordinary breaths.

Three deeper, longer breaths.

That's enough to begin.

Over time, your nervous system starts recognising the way back.

Ethical Note

This resource is intended for educational purposes and to support everyday moments of stress and emotional overwhelm. It is not a substitute for medical, psychological, or mental health care. If you or your child are experiencing persistent distress or concerns about emotional wellbeing, please seek support from a qualified healthcare professional.