

BASIC RELAXATION BREATHING

The Basic Relaxation Breathing technique is very helpful in deactivating the stress response, and can really help kids and teens calm down hyperactivity, anger and anxiety, as well as improve concentration.

It consists of breathing in through the nose to the count of four and breathing out through the mouth to the count of eight. Thus, we activate the parasympathetic nervous system twice as long as the sympathetic nervous system with a net result of calming our physiology and stress response.

Teach them this simple technique and encourage them to use it during their day as often as they think of it, particularly if they are hyper, angry, stressed out, worried, or distracted. It is an excellent way to increase their ability to self-regulate.

Breathe in through your nose to the count of four and out through your mouth to the count of eight. When you breathe out, purse your lips and blow gently like you are blowing a big bubble. This will help you slow down the exhale. Don't worry if your nose is stuffy, just breathe in and out through your mouth instead.

Inhale through your nose: 1-2-3-4.

Exhale through your mouth with lips pursed, blowing gently, like blowing a bubble:
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8.

Repeat 3-4 times.

Be sure to observe them when they are learning this to make sure they are breathing in slowly and then breathing out twice as slowly. Often, kids will inhale very rapidly to get a big breath. This is counterproductive and may activate them instead of calming them.