

Relaxation Strategies

Strategies to calm down the body's fight or flight response and reduce anxiety.

Deep breathing

- 1) Belly breathing
 - Sit comfortably with hands on belly.
 - Breathe in slowly through your nose.
 - Imagine you are blowing up a balloon that is expanding against your hand.
 - Breathe out slowly through your mouth, deflating the balloon.
 - Try to make your exhale longer than your inhale.
- 2) 3-4-5 breathing
 - Inhale for 3 counts
 - Hold for 4 counts.
 - Exhale for 5 counts
- 3) Fun ways to practice breath control: pinwheels, blowing bubbles, whistling.

Muscle Relaxation: tensing muscles and then releasing them allows them to relax.

- 1) Robot Ragdoll
 - First try to be stiff like a robot, keep your muscles tight.
 - Then relax all your muscles, try to be floppy like a ragdoll.
- 2) Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)
 - Sequentially tense then relax each muscle group.
 - Start by curling your toes tight for 5 seconds then release.
 - Then tense your calves for 5 seconds then release.
 - Gradually move up to the head.
 - Analogies, such as shrugging your shoulders like a turtle, can be helpful for younger children.

Imagery

- 1) Think of a place that is calming for you.
- 2) Imagine every detail, including each sense (sights, sounds, smell, taste, feel)

Mantra – A phrase to help calm and refocus.

- 1) Think of a coping thought.
- 2) Practice repeating this phrase when you're anxious.
- 3) Examples: "This too shall pass", "I am enough", "I can control my panic with breathing"