



MDT Home Resources



Mindfulness activities at home

Managing worries

Managing worries- progressive muscle relaxation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc>

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/MuscleRelaxation.pdf>

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (short)

1. SIT
ON A CHAIR...



2. "SCRUNCH"
UP YOUR
FACE...



THEN...
RELAX
IT...



3. TENSE
YOUR
ARMS...



THEN...
RELAX
THEM



4. TENSE UP YOUR
SHOULDERS
AND CHEST...



THEN...
RELAX
THEM



5. TENSE UP
YOUR LEGS...



...THEN RELAX!

6. BREATHE
IN
RELAXATION...



...BREATHE OUT
TENSION



The Feeling Exercise

Collect a number of interesting objects such as feathers, putty, stones, or anything else that might be interesting to hold. Give each child an object, and ask them to spend a minute just noticing what it feels like in their hand. They can feel the texture, if their object is hard or soft, and the shape. Afterwards, ask the children to describe what they felt. With bigger groups, pair children off to take turns completing the exercise together.

The Seeing Game

Ask the children to spend one minute silently looking around the room. Their goal is to find things in the room that they've never noticed. Maybe there are some big things like a poster or a picture, or just little details like cracks in the ceiling or an interesting pattern on the door. After the minute is up ask the kids to share the most interesting new things they noticed.

Ocean Breathing

Have the children sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Ask everyone to slowly breathe in through their nose, and then out through their pursed lips (as if they are blowing through a straw). Point out that the slow and steady breathing sounds like ocean waves, gently crashing on shore. Let the children continue breathing and making the ocean sound for one to two minutes.

The Power of Listening

Ring a bell, a wind chime, or anything else that creates a long trailing sound. Ask each child to listen, and silently raise their hand when they can no longer hear the sound. After the ringing ends, ask the children to continue listening to any other sounds they can hear for the next minute. When the minute ends, go around the room asking everyone to tell you what sounds they heard.

A vertical photograph of a forest floor with moss and tree trunks, serving as a background for the left side of the page.

Build a Stress Ball



If you're feeling brave, and are prepared to clean up a mess, provide the children with balloons, flour, and funnels to build their own stress balls (you may want to double-layer the balloons). Some other filling options include rice, small beads, or the leftover dots from punched paper. Once the kids have built their own stress balls, try using them with *The Feeling Exercise*.

The Body Squeezing Exercise



Have the children sit or lie down in a comfortable position, and ask them to squeeze and relax each of the muscles in their body one-by-one. They should hold each squeeze for about five seconds. After releasing the squeeze, ask the kids to pay attention to how it feels when they relax. Children understand this exercise better if you help them visualize how they can squeeze a particular muscle using imagery, such as the following:

1. Curl your toes tight like you are picking up a pencil with your feet.
2. Tense your legs by pretending like you are standing on your tippy-toes, trying to look over a fence.
3. Suck in your stomach as if you are trying to slide through a narrow opening.
4. Make fists with your hands and pretend like you are trying to squeeze all of the juice out of an orange.
5. Pretend like a bug landed on your nose, and you're trying to get it off without using your hands. Try to scrunch your face and move your jaw to make it fly away!

The Five Senses Exercise



Take the children outside if the weather is nice, and have them lie silently in the grass. Begin to call out each of the five senses in turn (sight, smell, sound, taste, touch), and ask the children to notice everything they can with that particular sense, until you call out the next one. This exercise can also work well on walks, and in a number of other situations.



How to Address Excessive Reassurance Seeking

Children and teens look to their parents for information about the world. It is normal and helpful for parents to provide children with information about challenging situations. This information may help children understand that those situations are not dangerous, and show them how to handle them effectively (e.g. what to do or say). For some children and teens, however, asking for reassurance about the same situation over and over again becomes an unhelpful way of coping.

What is the problem with giving reassurance?

Most parents already know that giving reassurance over and over again can be exhausting! Giving your child reassurance quickly becomes a bottomless pit: no matter how much reassurance you give your child, he or she will always want more! In fact, the more you give reassurance, the more you'll have to keep giving it. In a way, it becomes addictive for kids! Giving reassurance is a band-aid solution: it only relieves your child or teen's anxiety in the moment. More importantly, giving reassurance actually keeps your child's anxiety alive, because it maintains the problem in the long-term. Giving your child or teen reassurance also sends the message that there's actual danger that he or she needs to be protected from, when it is in fact the anxiety that is driving the reassurance seeking.

What is the solution?

In order to help your child face fears and cope with anxiety in a healthy and adaptive way, **YOU NEED TO STOP GIVING YOUR CHILD REASSURANCE.** If your child does not rely on reassurance seeking to relieve anxiety, he or she can gradually learn to cope with anxiety on his or her own: this can give your child a sense of independence and competence.

Easier said than done? For most parents, not giving their child or teen reassurance sounds very difficult. When your child asks for reassurance, he or she is obviously very upset, and many parents feel it is “cruel” to deny reassurance. There is a way to help your child to stop asking for reassurance without feeling as if you are being “mean” or “uncaring”.

How to Do it!

Step 1: Make a Clear Plan Before you start any anxiety management skill with your child, you need to have a clear idea of what exactly you will be doing. For example: What specific behaviours are you trying to change? (e.g., “Whenever my child asks me if the house is clean, I will no longer give reassurance that it is”, or “I do not want my child to call me at work several times every day to make sure I am okay”) Is everyone in the family on board? If you plan to stop giving reassurance to your child, it is important that everyone else in the family agrees. If your child can simply get reassurance from someone else, this strategy will not work. Make sure your child or teen understands and agrees with the plan. When he or she is calm (not experiencing anxiety), explain what the plan is, and why you are doing it.

How to talk to your child about the new plan

AN EXAMPLE

Parent: “We are going to set up a new plan in the house to help you to boss back your anxiety. For example, whenever you get anxious or worried that your homework isn’t perfect, what do you usually do?” Child: “I ask you to read it.”

Parent: “That’s right. And you do that many times every time you have homework. The reason you do this is because your anxiety starts bullying you around, telling you that you made a mistake and that not being perfect is really bad. But is your anxiety right or wrong when it tells you that?”

____ Child: “Well, I guess it’s wrong.” Parent: “Exactly. That’s because anxiety can be a big liar. So we need to stop anxiety from bullying you. We are going to do that by not listening when anxiety tells you to call me. So your job is going to be to try to do your homework without asking me to read it, even if you get anxious. My job will be to help you boss back your anxiety by asking you to read over your homework yourself. This is going to be our new plan, okay? When you ask me to help you, I am going to remind you that your anxiety is bullying you, and that you can do it fine by yourself. Eventually, anxiety is simply going to give up and stop bossing you around.

Step 2: Following Through on the Plan

Once you have explained the new plan to your child or teen, you need to follow through on it. There are a number of things you can say to your child when he or she comes to you for reassurance. Here are some examples: “You already know the answer to that question. I am not going to answer that.” “What if you didn’t do your homework perfectly -- what would happen?” “Maybe you did make a mistake on your exam; what could you do to cope with that?” “It sounds like your anxiety is acting up. What could you do to boss it back? Could you maybe do some relaxed breathing? Are there any helpful thoughts that you can tell yourself?” “What do you think? How could you handle that?” I guess you’ll just have to wait and find out.”

Active ignoring involves deliberately ignoring the question and not paying attention to your child's demands. However, once he or she stops asking for reassurance, give him or her lots of praise and attention. Return to not giving your child attention or reassurance if he or she starts asking you questions again. This strategy quickly teaches your child that reassurance will not be rewarded or answered by you, and that it is more beneficial not to repeatedly ask the same questions.

Step 3

Give lots of praise! Because this is hard work, make sure to repeatedly praise your child for any efforts made to not seek reassurance from you, or attempts to manage anxiety independently. Some positive comments you can make are: “You are doing such a great job!” “Look how well you bossed back your anxiety!” “I’m so proud of you!”

What to expect...

When you first stop giving reassurance, your child or teen will probably be very anxious. In fact, he or she might become very angry or frustrated, and even throw a temper tantrum. This is normal. It is important that if you have decided NOT to give reassurance, that you stick with it! Children and teens often get very angry when they do not get the reassurance that they have come to expect. If you keep at it, and stick to the plan, your child will stop seeking reassurance from you, and start managing anxiety in more healthy ways.

The Golden Rule is Consistency

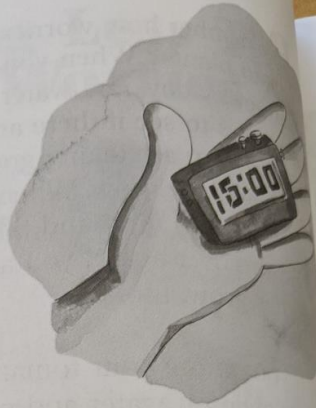
Sometimes parents will say they tried to stop giving reassurance, but it didn't work, and that their child or teen simply kept asking for reassurance. This usually happens when you have given in once or twice, and gave reassurance. Many parents will "break down" and give reassurance if their child has a really bad temper tantrum, cries, or delays a task that needs to get done (for example, wanting reassurance before going to school in the morning). This is understandable because it can be very difficult for parents to stop themselves from soothing their upset child or teen. Nevertheless, it is necessary. REMEMBER... For this strategy to work, you need to resist giving reassurance every single time!

Reassurance time

In addition, if absolutely needed, you can set up a pre-planned time with your child to address their worries. The reassurance time should not exceed 15 minutes. Please see next page.

Managing Worries- Setting up a “worry time”

If you are a person who worries about a lot of little things, try setting up a **WORRY TIME**. Your mom or dad can help you choose a certain time each day for Worry Time. Worry Time should last about 15 minutes.



Your mom or dad will sit with you during Worry Time and listen to whatever worries you have. There should be no interruptions. No TV. No phone calls. No little brothers wanting to play or big sisters needing help with homework.

Worry Time is the time to say whatever you want to say about your worries. During this special time, your mom or dad will listen and try to help.

There is just one very important rule about Worry Time:

If a worry bothers you at any other time of day, you are not allowed to spend time thinking about it or talking about it until Worry Time.

NO THINKING
OR TALKING
ABOUT WORRIES
UNLESS IT IS
WORRY TIME.

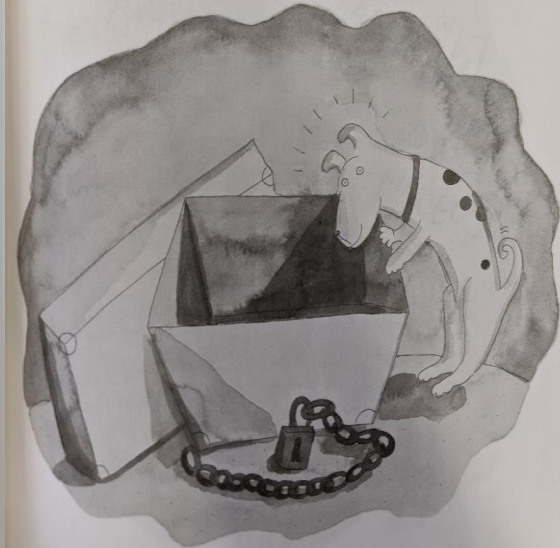
If a worry pops into your mind and it is not Worry Time, imagine a strong box. Close your eyes so you can picture the box in your mind.

Make sure that it has a cover and a strong lock. Then imagine yourself putting your worry into the box and locking it up.

Remind yourself that you can think about the worries again during Worry Time, but for now you will leave them in the Worry Box and walk away. Get busy with something else.



After awhile, you will find that there aren't big problems to deal with every day, so you can use your Worry Time to just chat with your mom or dad. Your parents should keep spending that 15 minutes with you, but when it isn't filled with worries any more, you might decide to call it something else, like **TALK TIME**.



Explaining calm breathing to your child

Why is calm breathing important? When your child is feeling anxious, his or her breathing will change. When we are anxious, we tend to take short, quick, shallow breaths or even hyperventilate. 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 him or her a sense of control. Calm breathing is a great portable tool that your child can use when feeling anxious, especially in situations when you are not there to help him or her through it.

Teaching the calm breathing technique

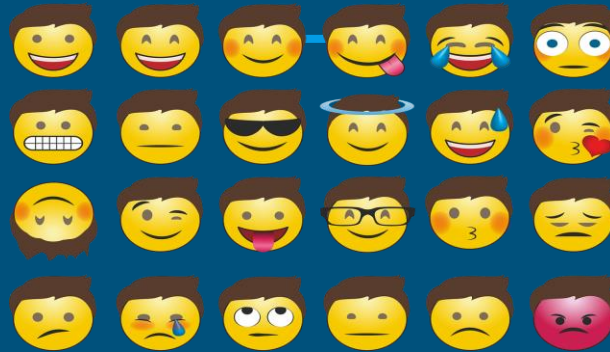
Step 1: Explaining calm breathing to your child This is a tool your child can use anywhere, anytime! Other people will probably not even notice when your child is using this tool. For older children and teens, explain that taking short quick breaths actually increases other feelings of anxiety (e.g. heart racing, dizziness, or headaches). Calm breathing will slow down his or her breathing.

Teaching the calm breathing technique

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 Exhale 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

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 (available at any toy store), 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

Emotional Regulation Strategies



Fun and simple activities for emotional regulation

<https://perfectionpending.net/20-fun-activities-to-help-kids-with-anxiety/>



Quick Ways to Help Kids Express Their Anger

Rip paper

Pop bubble wrap

Squish playdough

Wrap your arms around yourself and squeeze

Write a letter to someone

Jump on a trampoline

Do wall push-ups

Write down what's bothering you and rip it up

Squeeze a stress ball

Talk about it

Scribble on paper and crumple it up

Do jumping jacks

ZONES OF REGULATION

Watch the Movie "Inside Out" and see below for activities.
This Movie emphasizes the different feelings that an 11 year girl is feeling and how to manage her emotions.



WHAT ZONE ARE YOU IN?

BLUE		- Sick - Tired - Bored - Guilty - Lonely - Sad
GREEN		- Happy - Calm - Confident - Hopeful - Feeling Okay - Excited
YELLOW		- Frustrated - Worried/Anxious - Loss of some control - Scared - Annoyed - Disgusted
RED		- Angry - Out of Control - Yelling - Hitting - Mad

WHO IS CONTROLLING YOUR FEELINGS TODAY??

Feeling	A little bit	Somewhat	Pretty often	A lot	Too much!
Sadness 					
Anger 					
Fear 					
Happy 					
Annoyed 					

Inside Out: Getting to Know My Emotions



Sadness



Disgust



Joy



Anger



Fear

My emotion	Feels like	Sounds Like	A memory when I felt...
Sadness			
Disgust			
Joy			
Anger			
Fear			

Create Your Own Inside- Out Emotions

- Have children create their own emotions- happy, sad, anger, disgust, and fear. What they think those emotions would look like inside of them.
- This can be done by drawing, painting, or sculpting with clay/ playdough.
- Have children explain their creations (increase descriptive language)