

Mindfulness & Relaxation Strategies and Resources for Adults and Children

The Mindful Break:

taken from <https://www.mindful.org/a-simple-breathing-practice-to-keep-panic-at-bay/>

Whether we're faced with the all-encompassing pain of loss or merely withstanding a temporarily unpleasant situation, the Keeping Panic at Bay Mindful Break is a steadying anchor of calm in the midst of any life-storm.

1. Notice

Close the eyes, if possible, this break can also be practiced with eyes open, if necessary. Starting with the feet and moving upward, briefly scan each section of the body—lower legs, upper legs, bottom, stomach, chest, lower back, upper back—noticing and relaxing any areas of tension. Drop the shoulders, allow the arms to hang loosely, and soften the hands. Relax the jaw and tongue. Unfurrow the brow and forehead. Along the way, you might recognize other sensations not so easily mitigated, such as heaviness in the chest, nausea, aching muscles, headache, or stomach ache. Simply notice.

2. Allow

When faced with unpleasantness, fierce resistance is common, both in body and mind. Muscles tighten and thoughts futilely question and implore: *Why is this happening? This is so horrible! I can't do this!* The more we resist, the more painful it is, as we heap on the layers of struggle. Allowing does not mean we give up and give in; it does mean we acknowledge conditions as they are *in this moment*. Of course, if there is something that can be done to immediately alleviate the suffering, by all means, do. If, however, you have little control (except your reaction to it), *lean into allowing*. Though you may not like it one bit, it *is* your current reality. Fighting against it is a pointless exercise in frustration. As best you can, allow and accept, for now.

3. Breathe

Yes, I know you've been doing it all your life, but trust me on this one. When we are in distress, we unconsciously, intermittently hold our breath and breathe shallowly in the chest, alerting our nervous system to a threat. In order to counteract a cascade of fight-or-flight reactions, breathe deeply, filling up the belly and chest on the inhale and emptying on the exhale. Then, allowing the breath to come and go in its own rhythm, bring your attention to the natural rising and falling in the belly. When your attention drifts off, as it surely will countless times, kindly and firmly return it to the home base of the breath. Begin again and again, as you patiently ride out the passing storm.

Note: As with all things mindfulness, this break becomes easier the more you practice. Crisis meditation can be effective, but not nearly as much as when we meditate regularly. If you haven't yet established a daily meditation habit, let this mindful break inspire you.

Finding Peace in Difficult Times

taken from: www.mindful.org

Sometimes the world around us seems so callous and so chaotic that it's hard to remember when we last felt a sense of inner peace. At such times, mindfulness can help us cultivate moments of stillness in the eye of the storm. With this, we can weather what life throws at us, while also staying caring and attentive to one another's needs.

Here are three ways you can nurture your own well-being

1) First, offer kindness and compassion to yourself and others.

Loving-kindness meditation can help temper unpleasant emotions while nourishing positive ones.

2) Then, connect with a fellow traveller.

When we feel despair, our fight-or-flight response can cause us to isolate ourselves. Instead of holing up, reach out.

3) Finally, stay present with hard feelings.

Some emotions are so powerful that our natural impulse is to silence them, fearing that they will overtake us if we truly feel their force. A more effective way to ease tumultuous thoughts and emotions is to let them be what they are.

Useful Websites:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/coronavirus-anxiety.htm>

<https://mindfulness4u.org/mindfulness-mindfulness-exercises-can-enrich-lives/mindfulness-relaxation/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/>

5 Ways to teach Relaxation to your child by Educational Psychologist Lisa Gupta

Knowing how to keep calm in emotionally difficult situations is an important life skill that's never too early to learn. Even if you don't feel you've mastered it yourself, you can still help your child manage their stress levels – and perhaps improve your own stress management in the process.

1. Be a Role Model for keeping calm

Look carefully at how you deal with stressful situations and your own response to anger/anxiety. Try to model a calm response to your child and give reassuring statements like "I felt quite nervous before that, but managed to stay calm and that helped." Avoid generalisations such as "he's just like me...I have a short fuse". Create a positive self-belief in your child that behaviour can change, and praise your child when they have coped well.

2. Identify the Anxiety Triggers

Step back from the situation and try to notice any patterns in your child's behaviour and any factors that trigger anger or anxiety. Notice if you deal with their behaviour calmly and consistently.

3. Increase awareness of feelings

If your child is old enough, try to label the feeling (angry, upset, nervous etc.) and identify any physical changes that happen when they feel like this (e.g., feeling hot and sweaty, heart racing, etc.)

4. Teach Calming Techniques

A range of very simple techniques can be very effective when trying to calm down and relax:

- Breathe slowly through the nose, hands on the tummy and eyes closed.
- Breathe slowly and count from 1-5 (counting breath).
- Breathe out slowly as if blowing out the candles on a birthday cake.
- Visualise a calming colour as you breathe out (colour breath).
- Visualise a calming place as you breathe out.
- Say a word to yourself or short sentence ("I can keep calm").

Try to identify which of these techniques your child finds most helpful, and have that be their own way of calming down.

5. Practice as often as possible

Once they have chosen one of these calming down techniques, keep practising it as often as possible both in situations where they feel calm and relaxed, and in situations when they feel stressed. Your child can practise alongside you, and slowly move on to more

independent use. Have visual reminders (e.g., a picture on the fridge) or use a non-verbal cue (e.g., holding up five fingers) to help your child remember to use their chosen technique. You can also create a chart to record when they have used it (e.g., “I can use my counting breath when I feel angry”), and work towards a reward.

Why Relaxation is good for children

It is obvious why good mental health is essential to good learning. A relaxed child is able to think more constructively and positively. They have the space to step back to reflect on issues and their behaviour is vastly improved.

How to help your child Relax:

- Create a comfy space for your child to relax in – throw in cushions, teddy bears, pictures, pastel colours, a fish tank...
- Encourage your child to tell you if they are tired or do not feel like doing an activity you have planned
- Do not overload your child with too many out-of-school activities
- Before bedtime, help your child to relax with a warm bath, bedtime story or a guided meditation CD
- Yoga is an excellent way to help children relax and concentrate on their breathing and posture.

Useful Weblinks

Calm Down activities : <https://gozen.com>

<https://gozen.com/50-calm-down-ideas-to-try-with-kids-of-all-ages/>

<https://gozen.com/8-yoga-poses-for-stress-relief-for-kids/>

Techniques for helping children keep calm: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/seven-techniques-for-helping-kids-keep-calm>

Support for children and young people: www.youngminds.org.uk

Anxiety:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-anxiety/>

Coronavirus:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>