

Relaxation



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Relaxation is a useful skill for children dealing with depression, anxiety, substance use and anger management issues. First the child learns what relaxation feels like and how relaxing it can make them feel. They learn what people or experiences in their world make them nervous or tense. The goal is for them to relax before a stressful situation happens. This allows them to avoid the expected tense feeling altogether.

How does this practice work?

- Option 1-Imagery. The child closes their eyes, takes deep breathes and thinks about a fun place. Next, they picture themselves in this fun place.
- Option 2-Muscle relaxation. This technique requires a quiet place and time of day. The child relaxes different muscle groups in a specific order.
- Option 3-“Secret calming” exercise. This exercise uses short periods of relaxation that teach a child to reduce their feeling of tension. Secret calming can be done any time and in any place. Deep breathing is the key to this relaxation. The child takes long deep breaths and thinks of something that makes them happy.
- Option 4-Meditation. Child closes his or her eyes, takes deep breathes and focuses on their breathing, saying to themselves, “breathe in, breathe out.” This relaxation exercise could last 10 to 30 minutes.

Example:

Muscle relaxation

Jordyn gets into a comfortable position, closes their eyes and starts to breathe deeply. Next Jordyn tenses and relaxes different muscle groups until the session ends and they are feeling completely relaxed.

Secret calming exercise

At any time or any place Liam can stop what he is doing for a moment, take very deep breaths and exhale slowly. While Liam is deep breathing, he thinks of something that makes him happy.