



Kids SoonerFit Challenge

This is a way for the kids to participate with their parents in the June SoonerFit challenge. SoonerFit kids will not be eligible for a prize, but we encourage them to try some of the relaxing activities listed below.

Ten Great Ways to Help Children Relax

There are many techniques children can use to reduce their stress and relax. Depending on the child, some may work better than others. Try teaching your child one or two of the following techniques to begin, and then gradually add in more as he or she feels ready to try them.

1. Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is an effective way of slowing down the body's natural response to stress. It slows down the heart rate, lowers blood pressure and provides a feeling of being in control.

This simple technique can be done by anyone.

1. Simply breathe in deeply.
2. Hold the breath for a moment.
3. Release it slowly.

Repeat the deep breathing until you feel relaxed.

2. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation offers a wonderful way to relieve stress. This is accomplished by tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups in your body.

- Face - Ask your child to scrunch up her nose and forehead like she smells something stinky, and then have her relax her face. Repeat three times.
- Jaws - Ask your child to clench her jaws together tightly like she's a dog hanging on to a bone, and then have her release that imaginary bone and let her jaw go completely loose. Repeat three times.
- Arms and shoulders - Ask your child to stretch her arms out in front of her, and then raise them above her head and stretch as high as she can. Have her drop her arms and let them hang loose. Repeat three times.
- Hands and arms - Ask your child to imagine squeezing an orange as hard as she can with one hand, and then dropping that orange on the floor and letting her arm and hand go limp. Repeat three times, and then switch to the other arm.
- Stomach - Have your child lie on her back and clench her stomach muscles as hard as she can for just a moment. Have her release them and relax. Repeat three times, and then have her do the same technique while standing up.
- Legs and feet - Have your child stand and press her toes against the floor as though she is digging them into sand at the beach. Have her alternately press them and spread them enough to feel it in her legs, and then have her relax. Repeat three times.

With each of these techniques, encourage your child to notice how good her body feels when she relaxes each portion. The goal is to work through these exercises to achieve full body relaxation.

3. Exercise

Exercise is a great form of relaxation. Walking, running, swimming and playing all provide the kind of exercise that children love. However, do not overlook exercising to music. There are many excellent exercise CDs and DVDs for all age groups.

4. Visualization

Visualization is also known as visual guided imagery. This technique uses the imagination to slow down the chatter of the mind and help release negative thoughts and worries. This technique can be especially useful following progressive muscle relaxation, which first relaxes the muscles and then calms the mind. Imagining a beautiful, peaceful place is one type of visualization that's easy for nearly any child to use as a stress reducer. Color visualization can also be helpful and is a very simple technique to teach a child.

1. Ask your child to imagine a favorite color that makes her feel peaceful and safe.
2. Have her imagine taking in that color with each breath and sending it throughout her entire body as she exhales.
3. Have her continue until she visualizes being filled with her special, relaxing color.

A soothing sound, a special aroma, or the feeling of warmth or light can be used in place of the color.

5. Laugh

Laughter is a wonderful stress-reliever that, according to the Mayo Clinic, soothes tension and helps the body relax.

Ways to encourage your child to laugh include:

- Telling jokes
- Taking turns making silly faces
- Watching a funny cartoon

6. Stretch

Stretching relaxes built up tension in the muscles. Teach your child how to gently stretch each muscle group and feel the muscles relax.

7. Listen to Music

Listening to calming music can help a child regain focus. Even very young children may enjoy listening to relaxing classical music or the music of artists like Enya or Josh Groban.

8. Meditate

The Mayo Clinic also advises that meditation techniques, such as yoga or transcendental meditation, relax the mind and body. Here is a simple meditation your child can use at home, but it works well in the classroom too.

1. While your child sits on her bed at home, or at her desk before class begins, she should place her hands in her lap and close her eyes.
2. The next step is to breathe in and out slowly and evenly.
3. Each breathe in and each breathe out counts as a single count, and she should practice this even breathing for a count of at least 50 (try for at least 30 in the classroom).
4. As she settles into the meditation, she should focus on listening to her breathing. As she does, she'll begin to feel more calm and focused.
5. When she finishes her count of 50, she should take a very deep breathe, let it out slowly, and then open her eyes.

9. Cuddle

Encourage your child to cuddle with a pet or a hug a loved one. According to Deborah Rozman, PhD the interaction can lower blood pressure and decrease stress hormones.

10. Toe Tensing

Toe tensing draws tension down from the rest of the body. This simple exercise should be repeated ten times each session.

1. Lie on your back and allow yourself to sense your toes.
2. Use your toe muscles to pull all ten toes back in the direction of your face and hold to the count of ten.
3. Relax your toes and hold to the count of ten.

Practice These Techniques Together

Many of the techniques on this list are effective for individuals of any age. Do not hesitate to modify any of the techniques to make them age appropriate for your child, and feel free to participate yourself. Reducing your own stress and relaxing more might just have a trickle-down effect for your child as well.

Source: http://stress.lovetoknow.com/Top_Ten_Relaxation_Techniques_Children