

Teacher's Guide

Supporting the wellbeing of primary school children

Relaxation exercises



Relaxation reduces stress and can help students improve self-awareness, decision making and emotional regulation. As students learn techniques, they can be more able to identify stress and can choose to practice a relaxation technique to reduce the impact of stress. Practicing ten minutes every day can lead to students mastering effective techniques.

Breathing exercises

Elevator breathing

1. Direct students to slowly raise their arms above their head and say "Elevator Up!" while breathing in through their nose.
2. Then say "Elevator Down" while breathing out slowly and bringing their arms back down, repeat five times.

Balloon breathing

1. Sit in a comfortable position.
2. Place your hands around your mouth as if you are blowing up a balloon.
3. Take long deep breaths through your nose and blow up the imaginary balloon.
4. Slowly move your hands apart as the imaginary balloon gets bigger until the imaginary balloon is as big as you can make it.
5. Release the imaginary balloon into the sky.

Progressive muscle relaxation

To recognise and reduce tension in the body by slowly tensing and releasing muscle groups:

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, close eye if comfortable doing so or look down.
2. Take three deep breaths, noticing the air filling the lungs, hold each breath for a few seconds and release slowly.
3. Pay attention to your feet, tense the feet by curling the toes, hold onto the tension and notice what it feels like, hold for a few seconds, then release the tension and notice what it feels like.
4. Continue to tense and release the whole body progressively; lower legs, thighs, stomach, chest, shoulders, hands, lower arms, upper arms, neck and face.
5. Assess your whole body, notice the feeling of relaxation and how different it is to feelings of tension. Slowly stretch and open your eyes when ready.

A brief activity, such as tensioning and relaxing the shoulders, can refocus students at any time. Students may be engaged with fun descriptors, for example: 'Squeeze lemons to make lemonade' instead of squeeze your fist or 'squish your toes into the mud' or 'pull your head in like a turtle'.

Visualisation or guided imagery

Is the technique of forming a mental image of a peaceful, calming place or situation. Ask students to sit comfortably, close their eyes and concentrate on their breathing. Ask students to imagine the sights, sounds, smells and touch of their image and enjoy the positive feelings.

Autogenic relaxation

Is the practice of repeating words or suggestions that may help reduce tension. A student may imagine a peaceful setting and focus on controlled breathing and feelings of warmth, heaviness, and calm throughout the body, by repeating "my body is heavy and warm," or "I am relaxed."

If the behaviour persists despite trying a number of interventions, discuss the student's situation with a supervisor or member of the learning and wellbeing support staff at your school.

<https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/school-link-teachers-guide>