

Breathing Exercise #2: Windy Woods

Stand and make believe that you're a tree in the woods. Take a deep breath, filling your lungs completely all the way down to your belly. As you inhale, lift your arms up over your head. Now sway like a tree in the wind. Slowly exhale through your mouth, making the sound of the wind. Lower your arms as you finish exhaling. Repeat three times.

Breathing Exercise #3: Balloon Breath

Stand and make believe you're a balloon letting its air out. Put your hands on your shoulders. As you inhale deeply, letting your belly expand, extend your arms up over your head with your elbows slightly bent. Hold that position for a few seconds. As you exhale slowly through your mouth, make the sound of the balloon losing air - "p-p-p-p-p-p" (like blowing a raspberry). Slowly empty your lungs and lower your arms until you have exhaled all the air and your hands are back in their original position on your shoulders. Repeat three times.

**These three breathing exercises are appropriate for children age two and older. For younger children, do the breathing exercises facing the child, making eye contact with them and encouraging them to imitate whichever parts they can.

Mindful Moment: Relaxation and Breathing Exercises

When you stop and calm your thoughts and feelings, you give yourself the chance to think about the things you say and do. This helps you make better decisions. Practicing breathing techniques will help you and your child learn to pause and think before acting. They're easy to teach, and they will calm your child's thoughts and feelings when they are upset or over-stimulated. Children will learn these breathing techniques best when they're calm, so don't try to teach your child when they're upset. Make sure you are calm before you teach your child any of the following skills. Take a few minutes to do a mindfulness exercise yourself; calm yourself and bring yourself to the present.

Breathing Exercise #1: Butterfly Breath

Think about how a butterfly looks when it sits on a branch, slowly opening and closing its wings. Keep that image in your mind. Stand up and lightly press the palms of your hands together in front of your chest, as if praying. This is your "wings closed" position. Inhale deeply as you slowly "open your wings". Move your hands apart until your palms are facing forward and your thumbs are in line with your shoulders. Your back is tense. Hold this position for a few seconds. Then slowly exhale and bring your hands back together. Allow your back muscles to relax as you move your hands back to their original position, gently touching in front of your chest. Repeat three times.