

## Mindfulness Practices for Stress Reduction with Children-Judith Bernstein

Emphasize parents' role as a co-learner and guide, embodying attitudes of mindfulness: acceptance, curiosity, receptivity, attentiveness, kindness, and attunement. Practice is key (with a light touch). Encourage parents to model, invite inquiry, discover, and practice with their children.

### Cultivating mindfulness/attunement to physical, mental, and emotional states:

1. Periodically pausing in the current activity to take a breath and "check in" with oneself. What are you noticing in the body? What thoughts are here? What emotions are present? Meeting whatever's here with acceptance and kindness. Developing awareness of signals of stress reactivity as well as ease. Parents can integrate this practice during the day.
2. "Weather meditation" from Snel, E. (2013). ***Sitting still like a frog: Mindfulness exercises for kids (and their parents)***. Boston: Shambhala. (CD of guided mindfulness practices accompanies book.)

### Cultivating physical and mental ease:

1. For younger children or those challenged to attend for longer periods, lying on the floor, briefly tensing the entire body and then releasing. Taking 5 very deliberate breaths. See Huebner, Dawn. (2006). ***What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety***. Washington, D.C.: Magination Press.
2. For older youngsters, adolescents, and young adults, offer direct instruction for diaphragmatic breathing. See Wehrenberg, M. (2008). ***The 10 best-ever anxiety management techniques: Understanding how your brain makes you anxious and what you can do to change it***. New York: W. W. Norton.
3. Also for older youngsters, adolescents, and young adults guide aloud the progressive body relaxation offered in Lantieri, L. & Goleman, D. (2008). ***Building emotional intelligence: Techniques to cultivate inner strength in children***. Boulder, CO: Sounds True. (CD of guided mindfulness practices accompanies book.)

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## Presentation on mindfulness for children and adolescents.

Child Study Team 6/19/15

Stephanie Bourgeois, LCSW

These techniques are some of my favorite that I use with kids and adolescents in my practice. They are all based on **Rebecca Wing's** work and her workshop on mindfulness techniques. I'm giving her full credit for these exercises, although I have added my own spin to them at times too.

I explain to my clients that the Definition of mindfulness is *Being aware of present experience with acceptance, gentleness and non judgment.*

The younger the child, the shorter the instruction.

### Calming anxiety

#### Belly breathing- soft belly breathing

1. Place a beany bear on the belly button of client as they lay on the floor.
2. Explain that they will be giving the bear a gentle ride while they breathe

3. Softly breathe out and let the bear sink down a little bit
4. Softly breathe in and let the bear rise up a little bit
5. Allow the bear to gently ride up on the in-breath, and down on the out breath
6. Tell yourself: breathing in softly, breathing out soft belly
7. I might add that they count with the in breath: up to 4, and through pursed lips in the out breath up to 8.

**Making room for painful feelings:**

**The ice cube exercise**

This is a great exercise to help people get more comfortable with uncomfortable feelings.

Explain that there is a way to experience difficult feelings without judgment. Teach them to practice describing the sensations of what they experience.

1. You and your client each hold an ice cube in the palm of your hand.
2. Instruct the client to describe their discomfort by stating what they notice. Help them practice describing the physical sensation they notice in their hand, not the pain.
3. Use descriptive words like “ numb, tingling, hot, cold etc”
4. Have client describe other sensations they may have in their arm or shoulder
5. Slowly let ice fall back in cup and describe how the palm feels now.

Then ask:

\* What would this activity be like if you did this with a feeling like sadness, anxiety or anger?\* How could you treat your difficult emotions like that ice cube in your hand?\* Have them explore how this might help them tolerate negative feelings better

**Self-regulation: settling difficult emotions Glitter ball.**

1. Have client hold a glitter ball or snow globe
2. Describe glitter as a strong emotion ( anger, sadness, fear)
3. What happens to your view when you shake the ball?
4. How does the glitter /strong emotion cloud your seeing through the ball?
5. What happens if you sit quietly and hold the ball still?
6. How does the ability to see through the ball change as the glitter/emotion settles?
7. Did the emotion/glitter totally go away?
8. This is how we can practice mindfulness when strong emotions rise in us. These states may keep us from seeing clearly or keep us from making choices that will promote our wellbeing. As we sit quietly and take a few minutes--and maybe practice breathing exercises for example-- the swirling glitter inside us can settle.

Sometimes we're so shaken up, we need a minute to settle. This exercise slows down our

reaction time.

I may refer to this exercise later on in treatment: for example: “sounds like your glitter ball got shaken up last night when you got mad etc.”

The older the kid: I talk about their brain and the concept emotional highjacking: I use this scholastic resource sometimes: “getting to know and love your brain”.

[http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/mindup/pdfs/MindUP\\_K-2\\_Sample\\_Poster.pdf](http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/mindup/pdfs/MindUP_K-2_Sample_Poster.pdf)

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### **Thoughts are bubbles-- relationship with thoughts:**

1. Blow bubbles into the room or outside
2. Have client focus on one bubble to see what happens to it.
3. Client describes what happens to the bubble as they watch it fly and eventually pop.
4. Have client identify a thought or feeling they are struggling with and label the next bubble with it.
5. Explain that our thoughts are like bubbles, they come and go : they arise, they fly around inside of us, and then eventually pop, allowing the next thought bubble to arise.

### **Thoughts are paper airplanes-- relationship to thoughts**

1. Client identifies one or more recurring thoughts that they struggle with and one or more emotions that accompany the thought.
2. Make separate airplanes for each thought and each emotion
3. Write down one thought/emotion on the wing of one airplane. Decorate the airplane if you want while having a conversation about the recurring thoughts.
4. Have the client stand in front of you and shoot the airplanes at you, stating aloud the emotion and thought on each airplane before flying it. The therapist tries to catch them as they fly by. Then you switch places, therapist is shooting the airplane this time
5. Now fly the airplanes at each other without trying to catch them, just letting them fly by.
6. What was it like to try and catch the thought/emotion airplanes? what as it like to let them simply fly by?
7. Talk about the difference: what was it like to try to catch the airplane? what about letting it fly by? easier, right? *What would it be like to let your thoughts and emotions fly in your awareness without trying to catch or hold onto them?* that is mindfulness practice. If you let them float by, they go away on their own. Thought and feelings are transitory events, they rise and fall.

## **Direction of Energy Technique and the Compassionate Touch: Phyllis Gordon, OT**

This is a helpful technique to increase one's mindfulness and consciousness about what is going on in the body. It can effectively help facilitate release and revitalization of tissue. This is a touch technique that is experiential and could have many physiological reasons how and why it works. We are planning to direct, pass, or organize a healing energy for the intent of making somebody feel better. Sometimes one needs to experience something to fairly evaluate. Then we can use our critical and rational left-brain to begin to analyze this strategy.

### Implementing the Direction of Energy

- Place one hand on either side of a painful or achy site.
- Pretend that your hands are electrodes and that you're passing energy back and forth between them.
- You may feel heat radiating, a therapeutic pulse, a palpable softening. These are all signs of release or that it's working.
- Intending that this will work will help you feel and be more sensitive.

### *I Can Show You I Care: Compassionate Touch for Children by Susan Cotta*

- This illustrated storybook geared toward young, school-aged children, teaches this Direction of Energy technique. The students learn about kindness, caring and respect that is associated with the Compassionate Touch. This program has brought much positivity and behavioral improvements to the classroom and is recognized worldwide.

If someone gets hurt physically or feelings – (after reading the book *Compassionate Touch*)

1. Is it okay if I offer Compassionate Touch?
2. If child says yes – Place your hand on the hurt (on the heart, if feelings)
3. Close eyes – Send happy thoughts like rainbows, sand castles, stars, lollipops etc
4. Wait for the hurt person to feel the warmth and tingle of healing
5. Ask if this helped?

(This summary is a link from [www.ethicsusa.org](http://www.ethicsusa.org) about The Compassionate Touch Program in schools)

### Bibliography

*(now it is time to engage your left-brain)*

Becker, R. E., (1997). *Life in motion*. Portland, OR: Stillness Press.

Cotta, Susan, (2003). *I Can Show You I Care*. Berkley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Ridley, C., (2006). *Stillness*. Berkley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Upledger, J. E., & Vredevoogd, J. D., (1983). *Craniosacral Therapy*. Seattle, WA: Eastland Press.

## Possible Future Topics

### 1. Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) or The Tapping Solution

Tapping is a combination of Ancient Chinese Acupressure and Modern Psychology that works to physically alter your brain, energy system and body all at once. The practice consists of tapping with your fingertips on specific meridian points while talking through traumatic memories and a wide range of emotions.

Also helps for pain relief.

### 2. CV-4 Stillpoint Technique-

Learn how to make your own Stillpoint Inducer or we can purchase the original as a group for a discount.

Relax In One Simple Step

Inducing a Still Point may help in:

- Providing deep relaxation and helping reduce stress
- Relieving headaches
- Easing chronic musculoskeletal pain
- Enhancing immune system efficiency
- Facilitating your body's self-correcting abilities
- Promoting an overall sense of well-being

This Still Point Inducer™ was inspired by Osteopathic Physician John E. Upledger, developer of CranioSacral Therapy. A Still Point is a pause in the craniosacral rhythm and may have many health benefits.

Phyllis Gordon MSOTR/L

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## **Multisensory Approaches to Self-Calming—Dinah Leiter, OT**

*\*Provide soothing input daily so that the child is accustomed to self-soothing and can access these skills on their own when upset or anxious.*

### **Activities**

#### ***1. Tactile input***

- *Releases a calming effect to the child's body*
  - a) *Brushing: Hold the sensory brush horizontally and press firmly on the skin so that the bristles bend. Stroke arms, back, and legs (not inner thigh, face, or stomach).*



- b) *Massage: Provide deep touch by providing firm long strokes over the child's entire body.*

## 2. **Proprioceptive input**

- *Deep input throughout body, helps regulate the child's body and emotions*
  - a) *Provide tight hugs and a lot of cuddling to the child*
  - b) *Pillow fights and rough housing*

## 3. **Create a "chill" spot**

- *Provide a cozy cushion, calm music, and/or something to suck on while participating in a calming activity such as sand play, reading, or coloring.*



- *Bonus points for dimmed lights and/or aroma therapy.*

## 4. **Breathing activities**

- *Helps regulate body and induces a calming affect*
  - a) *Blow pens*



- b) *Bubble mountain: Fill a bowl with soapy water. Using different sized straws, blow a big bubble mountain*
- c) *Balloons*



- d) *Sing songs that require taking a deep breath (ex: days of the week in one breath)*
- e) *Blow bubbles: The child must keep the bubbles in the air by blowing through a tube/straw*
- f) *Zones of regulation breathing techniques: Lazy 8 breathing, The six sides of breathing (See attached papers)*

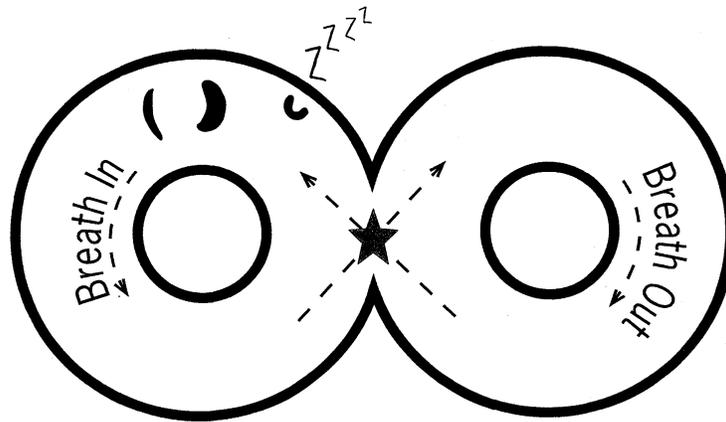
## 5. Yoga

- Chanting, breathing, and postural control help facilitate focus and stability.



The ZONES of Regulation® Reproducible T

# Lazy 8 Breathing

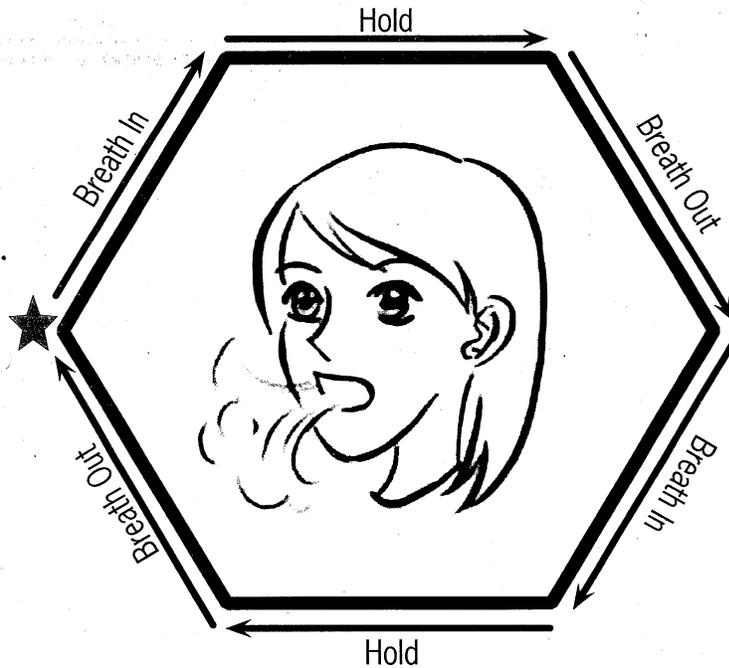


Trace the Lazy 8 with your finger starting at the star and taking a deep breath in.

As you cross over to the other side of the Lazy 8, slowly let your breath out.

Continue breathing around the Lazy 8 until you have a calm body and mind.

## The Six Sides of **Breathing**



Starting at the yellow star trace with your finger the sides of the hexagon as you take a deep breath in, feeling your shoulders rise as the air fills you. Trace over the next side as you hold your breath for a moment. Slowly breathe out as you trace the third side of the hexagon. Continue tracing around the bottom three sides of the hexagon as you complete another deep breath. Continue The Six Sides of Breathing cycle until you feel calm and relaxed.

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### **Resources:**

- The Whole Brain Child  
By: Dr. Daniel Siegel
- Mind Builders Play Manual  
By: Sibylle Janert
- The Kids Guide to Staying Awesome and in Control  
By: Lauren Brukner
- Helping Children to Cope with Change, Stress, and Anxiety  
By: Deborah M. Plummer
- Yoga for Children  
By: Lisa Flynn, E-RYT, RCYT

By: Dinah Leiter OTR/L



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**Breathing Exercises: Shoshana Newman, PT**

When we focus on breathing fully and deeply, we move out of our sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) and into our parasympathetic nervous system (relaxation and receptivity).

**Flower Breathing**

Imagine smelling a beautiful flower, breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Try to smell the flowers and blow out the birthday candles.

**Elevator Breathing**

Imagine you are stepping in an elevator on the first floor. As the elevator goes up from the ground floor to the penthouse or 5<sup>th</sup> floor you breath in deeply through your nose. Then as the elevator returns to the ground floor, exhale slowly to the same count.

**Hissing Breathing**

Breathe in the nose, long and deep, and out through your mouth with a hissing sound, long and slow.

**Bumble Bee Breathing**

Breathe in through your nose, then with fingers in your ears hum out your exhalation.

**Bunny Breathing**

Just 3 quick sniffs in the nose and one long exhale out the nose.  
Do this 3 or 4 times.

**Conductor Breathing** ( think music conductor)

Take three deep breathing in through the nose without exhaling  
first breath- lift arms straight out in front of you,  
second inhale-lift arms to the side at shoulder height  
third inhale- lift arms straight up,  
on the exhale sweep arms down and bend forward to take a bow!

**Bear Breathing**

Inhale through the nose, pause; exhale out the nose. Try the count of 3 or 4 for inhale and exhale.

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