

# Relaxation/Calm Down Strategies To Promote Self-Regulation

## Focused breathing Exercises

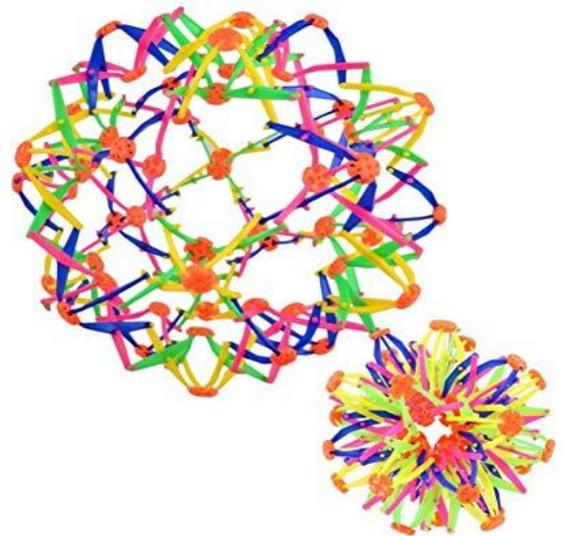
Slow deep breathing can make us feel better and can help children to feel calm, content and focused so they are ready to learn. A useful way to explain to children that slow and deep breathing is good for them is to tell them that 'Nice slow breathing tells our brains that everything is OK' (McDonald, 2016). The more children practice controlled breathing exercises, the more effective the strategy will become.

### The Expandable Ball

Make sure the children are sitting in a relaxed, comfortable and upright position, as this promotes good posture for deep breathing. Ask the children to breathe in and out in following the movements of the expandable ball. As a practice you can demonstrate faster and then slower breathing.

Move the ball in and out slowly, allowing the out breath to be slightly longer than the in breath (e.g. in breath to the count 4 and out breath to the count of 6).

Encourage the children to think about what they felt or noticed during the exercise.



## **Chocolate Cake Breathing (P2)**

Make sure the children are sitting in a relaxed, comfortable and upright position, as this promotes good posture for deep breathing.

Ask the children to use their imagination to think about a chocolate cake and one candle.

Ask the children to imagine that they are smelling their chocolate cake (breathing in through their nose)  
Hold the breathe for 3 seconds (count inside your head)  
Gently blow out the candle (breathing out of their mouth)

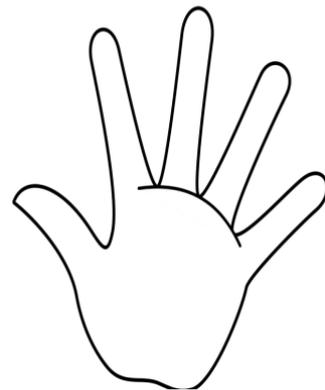


Children should repeat this a number of times. Encourage the children to think about what they felt or noticed during the exercise.

## **Breathing Hand (P3/4)**

Make sure the children are sitting in a relaxed, comfortable and upright position, as this promotes good posture for deep breathing.

Start at the bottom of thumb, breathing in and out as you move up and down fingers around your hand e.g. breath in (go to top of thumb), pause, breath out (go down other side of thumb), breath in (go to top of index finger) pause etc....



Encourage the children to think about what they felt or noticed during the exercise.

## Mind Bottles

The mind bottle can be used as a calming technique with children. The bottle can be used to help children understand how their minds work, and that their minds can sometimes become overwhelmed, busy and cloudy. Watching the contents of the jar settle helps children to recognise that they can let their minds and thoughts settle, to help them feel calmer. Practicing mindfulness informed activities such as this regularly can also help children to learn how to 'aim and sustain' their attention, and thus can help a child develop their capacity to concentrate.

McDonald (2016)\* suggests that the mind bottle can be introduced as our mind or clever brain, and the glitter as our thoughts. You can shake the bottle to demonstrate that our minds can be full of busy thoughts, and that it can be good to stop and let our thoughts calm and settle, just like the glitter.

Ask the children to sit quietly, make themselves comfortable, and to take nice deep breaths while they watch the glitter in the bottles. Once the glitter in the bottles has settled, you ask the children what they noticed about their thoughts or how their bodies are feeling.

As an alternative activity, the children can guess how many deep breaths they will need to take before the glitter settles. You can then test out some of their suggestions.



\*McDonald, A. (2016). *Feel Brave Teaching Guide*. Wales: Crown House Publishing.

## Mind Bottle Recipe

You will need

- A plastic bottle
- A jug of warm water
- Glitter glue (fill between 1/9 and 1/3 of the bottle, the more glue you use the slower the glitter will move)
- 60 -80g Glitter
- A drop of gel food colouring
- Strong glue (to stick the lid on the bottle)
- Optional - Assorted small sequins

(Quantities are based on a 500ml bottle, so if you're using a larger bottle, you may need to scale up the ratios)

Add warm water until one third of the way up your bottle

Add the glitter glue and stir until it is combined with the water.

Add the food colouring and stir. Try not to add too much food colouring or it will become hard to see the glitter.

Pour in the glitter. You can use more or less than suggested, or can add sequins for extra texture and interest. Stir well until the mixture is well combined.

Top up your bottle with the rest of the warm water.

When happy with the movement of your mind bottle, glue on the lid.





## Farmer and the Seed Relaxation

In pairs the children will act out this role play, each child has a turn being the farmer and the seed.

The Farmer plants the Seed  
Gently pat your seed all over

The Sun warms the Seed  
Gently rub your seed to warm it like the sun

The Rain waters the Seed  
Gently tap your fingers over the seed

The Seed begins to Grow

The Farmer hugs the Seed

The Seed grows tall

The Seed hugs the Farmer

**\*\*Then swap roles, the farmer becomes the seed and the seed becomes the farmer\*\***