

Teaching Self-Regulation to Young Children

Developmentally, beginning at the age of approximately 7-14 months, children can begin to imitate a familiar gesture, then a new gesture and then a variety of new gestures.

*Begin to teach children some self-regulation skills such as: shaking hands, stomping feet, shaking arms, moving shoulders, etc. at this age through songs/finger plays. Some children may need assistance when first learning the actions. Songs can also teach children to wait and control their bodies, which are important skills towards self-regulation (emotional regulation).

Songs/finger plays include: Peek-a-boo, Row, Row Your Boat, Roly Poly, I have two Hands, Sleeping Bunnies, If You're Happy and You Know it, Head and Shoulders, Hokey Pokey, Twinkle Twinkle, Reach Inside, Down at the Corner, etc.

Ways to Teach Deep Breathing (Calming Activity) to Children

Why Practice Deep Breathing?

- Deep breathing helps the body think it is in a calm state (as opposed to the fight or flight state)
- When we are in a state of stress our bodies are in a fight or flight state; our bodies react with an increase of heart rate and rapid breathing. In a calm state our heart rate slows down and we can regulate ourselves more successfully
- Deep breathing can be used anywhere. Practice in a calm state to help our brains and bodies learn deep breathing

Make it Fun for Children:

Step 1: begin by blowing concrete objects

Blow a pinwheel: Blowing a pinwheel helps a child practice deep breathing

Blow a Feather: Have a child hold a feather and blow it up one side and down the other side





Blow a paper cup, a feather, a cotton ball using a straw: Have child(ren) hold a straw and breath in, then breathe out, blowing paper cups, cotton balls, feathers



Blowing Jellyfish Tentacles: Make jellyfish using paper plates and streamers. Have the child(ren) make the jellyfish move and swim by blowing on the tentacles.



Dragon Breathing Fire: Make dragons using cups or toilet paper rolls and use streamers for their fire. If using cups, poke holes in the bottom and have child(ren) make their dragons breathe fire by breathing out through cup or toilet paper roll (the streamers will move !)



Blow harmonicas, kazoos, noisemakers, whistles: Have child(ren) blow any kind of noisemaker, musical instruments, whistles can help teach deep breathing.



Bubbles: When children blow bubbles it is an amazing way to slow down and breathe.



Breathing Buddies: Have child(ren) put stuffed animal on their stomach. When they breathe in , they can watch their breathing buddy go down and when they breathe out slowly they can watch their breathing buddy go up.

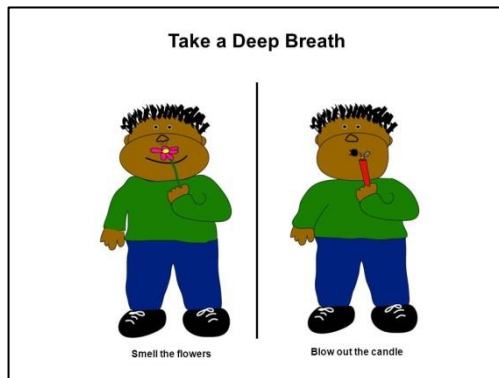


Rocket Ship: Create rocket ships with child(ren). Once you have drawn the rocket ships and cut them out, tape a small piece of a pipecleaner on the back of the rocket ships. Then, put each rocket ship on a straw (the pipecleaner will allow the rocket ship to fit in the straw). Then, each child can blow a rocket ship into space using a deep breath.



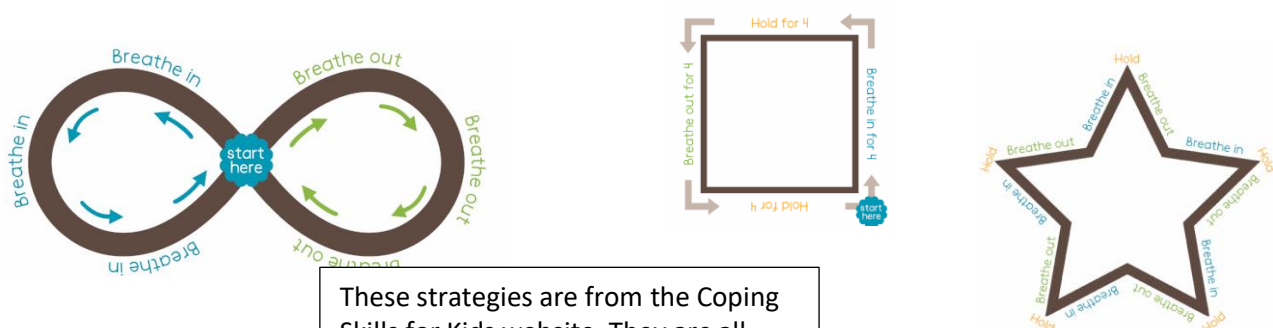
Step 2:

Then move to more abstract forms of breathing relaxation:



Flower/Candle or Chocolate (Strawberry)/Candle Activity: Bring in a flower or chocolate or strawberry and have child(ren) **smell** flower, chocolate or strawberry and bring in candle (do not light) and then after child(ren) have smelled have them **blow out** candle (this has child(ren) learn breathing in and out).

Square, Figure 8 and Star Breathing:



These strategies are from the Coping Skills for Kids website. They are all available for free on their site.