

Stress Management Series (1 of 3)

Deep Breathing

The first step to stress management for kids is to help them understand what stress, worry, and anxiety are. They can think of it as their built-in alarm system that scans the environment for potential threats. Remind children that experiencing stress is a part of being human, it is normal, and that handling worry takes practice. Today you will introduce them to stress and some techniques to help them manage it and relax. This lesson is a series. It explores body scan, journaling, and deep breathing. You may do one or multiples in the series. Our goal is not to eliminate stress, we can't, but to teach children ways to handle the stress.

Social Emotional Learning

Competency:

- Self Management
- Self-Awareness

Purpose:

- Develop Basic understanding of stress
- Realize there are things to do that can help manage stress.
- Experience deep breathing.
- Try different techniques for deep breathing.

Materials:

- Soft music (optional)

Background and Introduction

- Deep breathing or belly breathing is good for all of us.
- “Take in a deep breath through your nose, filling up your lungs with air and pausing at the top. Then, slowly exhale the air out until your lungs are empty. What did you notice?”
- “Taking a slow and intentional breath (or several) is the fastest way to activate the body’s relaxation response. It gives your body a chance to calm and reset.”
- “Many of us have developed a habit of fast, shallow breaths that increase tension and reduce fresh oxygen flow throughout the body. When we reconnect with natural deep breathing patterns, our nervous system can relax. For kids, this can mean reducing stress and emotional turmoil.”
- “Using your breath is the most powerful technique to relieve stress, center your mind, and calm the body. It’s almost too simple, which is why it’s often overlooked.”

Directly From *Benefits of Belly Breathing for Kids* by Stephanie. Balancing Elephants. Oct 25, 2021

<https://balancingelephants.com/benefits-of-belly-breathing-for-kids/>

<https://balancingelephants.com/8-stress-management-activities-for-kids/>

Adapted by Angie Holmes , 4-H Educator, October 2022 from balancingelephants.com and mindful.org



Success Indicators:

- Participants try deep breathing
- Participants start to practice deep breathing on their own

Recommended Group Size:

- Any

Est. Time:

- 10 minutes

Preparations and Tips

- If you want to use soft relaxing music while doing the deep breathing, secure that for use.
- Make sure participants are in a position where the lungs and diaphragm have space to move.
- Encourage breathing through the nose (if comfortable).
- Practice deep breathing daily

Activity

Instructions to give to participants. Join in with them.

- Please sit or stand up nice and tall. Think good posture.
- Let's begin by paying attention to our breathing. Notice your breath. Are you breathing through your mouth or nose or both?
- Now take one of our hands and place it over our belly, put the other hand over our heart.
- Close your mouth. Let's breathe in through our nose, like smelling a flower, and then exhale out through our mouth like blowing out a candle.
- Ok, here we go....let's do it on my count. Breathe in deeply through our nose to fill up our belly for 1...2...3...4 hold that for 1...2...3 now, breathe out through our mouth, pushing all the air out for 1...2...3...4
- Let's repeat this together three more times and notice how we feel.

Wrap-up

- Can you think of a time in your day that this might be helpful? How about a situation when this could be helpful?
- Remind students they can take deep breathes in through the nose and out through the mouth pretty much anywhere.