



# **Appendix B: Calming & Grounding Activities**

## Overview of Appendix B: Calming and Grounding Activities

Teaching parents and children to recognize when they are experiencing emotional stress, combat reminders, and deployment reactions is the first step in emotional awareness. A second step is to teach families techniques to change the intensity of emotional reactions. Relaxation techniques offer families strategies to lower their Feeling Thermometer ratings and return to a more comfortable emotional state. Use these relaxation scripts in sessions with children and parents to practice relaxation skills.

The Calming and Grounding Scripts in Appendix B include:

- Abdominal Breathing
- Deep Breathing
- Guided Imagery
- Visualization
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Younger Children

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## Abdominal Breathing Script

Take several deep breaths. In, 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose. If you have difficulty breathing out through your nose, you can exhale through your mouth.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Notice your breathing. Where does the air go once it is inside your body? Is the air coming into your chest? Or is it coming down into your abdomen?

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Try moving the air all the way to the bottom of your lungs down into your abdomen. You can put your hand on your stomach. When you are breathing deeply into your abdomen, your hand should rise and fall as you inhale and exhale.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

When you breathe deeply, the air comes deeper into your lungs and delivers fresh and rejuvenating oxygen to your muscles all over your body.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. Keep breathing in slowly and breathing out slowly.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. Continue breathing deeply into your abdomen for five more refreshing breaths.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

## Deep Breathing Script (for use after abdominal breathing is mastered)

Sit or lie in a comfortable position.

Take several deep breaths. In, 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

If you want, you can close your eyes. Relax. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. When you breathe in, bring the air all the way down into your abdomen. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Notice your breathing. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Keep breathing in slowly and breathing out slowly.

As you breathe in, picture the air coming into your mouth, down into your lungs. The air is swirling around and dancing through your lungs.

Now continue to breathe in. And out. Imagine the oxygen crossing out of your lungs and into the rest of your body. Picture the oxygen all over your body.

Breathe in slowly and exhale slowly.

As oxygen is delivered to all of your muscles and organs, any toxins or waste products are picked up and pushed back out of the body. Imagine these toxins coming back into your lungs. Up and out of your mouth with every exhalation.

Continue to breathe deeply. In 1, 2, 3. With nutrients and oxygen for your lungs and muscles.

And exhale. Blowing out all of the toxins and waste from your body.

This time when you inhale, picture the air traveling up into your head. It will deliver all of the healthy and refreshing oxygen to your brain. And on its way back out, it will take with it any negative thoughts or stress. All of that stress disappears as you exhale. 1, 2, 3.

Continue breathing, delivering nutrients and getting rid of negativity for five more breaths.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5

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## Guided Imagery

Sit or lie in a comfortable position.

Take several deep breaths. In, 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

If you want, you can close your eyes. Relax. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. When you breathe in, bring the air all the way down into your abdomen. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Notice your breath. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Keep breathing in slowly and breathing out slowly.

Think about a place that makes you feel content, calm, and relaxed. This could be a beach, a meadow, a room in your house, a favorite vacation spot. This could be near the ocean, or a stream, or up in the mountains. Think about whatever place helps you to feel content, calm, and relaxed.

Continue to breathe in slowly and out slowly.

Think about the place that makes you feel content, calm, and relaxed.

Imagine that you are there now. Imagine how the place looks. Is it sunny? What colors do you see? As you imagine yourself in this special place, pay attention to the textures, colors, and what objects are around. Is there any water? Are there trees? Is there grass? Or sand? What color is the sky?

Now focus on the sounds? Can you hear any wind? Do you hear water? Think about how it sounds. Do you hear any birds? Do you hear any children or people talking? How does the ground sound as you walk on it?

Now think about how it smells? What are the different scents that are entering your nose? Breathe in deeply and focus on the different smells.

Next focus on how it feels to be there. How does your skin feel? How do your feet feel walking around your special place? Do you feel warm? Or cool? How do your eyes feel? Do you feel calm and relaxed?

Take a few more moments and savor how it feels to be here. Think about the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations.

(Stay quiet for one minute).

- *continued*

## **Guided Imagery** - *continued*

Now bring your awareness back to your breathing.

Focus on your breathing.

Bring your awareness back into the room.

When you are ready, open you eyes.

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## Visualization

**Note: this script uses images of the beach.**

If you are working with someone that might be reactive to sand imagery, consider using the Guided Imagery Script or alter this script for a walk along a stream or meadow.

Sit or lie in a comfortable position.

Take several deep breaths. In, 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

If you want you can close your eyes. Relax. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. When you breathe in, bring the air all the way down into your abdomen. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Notice your breath. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Keep breathing in slowly and breathing out slowly.

Now imagine that you are at the beach. Imagine yourself standing on the sand.

- The sun is bright.
- The sky is blue.
- There are few white clouds but for the most part it is a beautiful clear day.

You see the ocean ahead and hear the waves crashing.

Smell the salt in the air.

You can feel the light humidity in the air.

- Feel the sun shining on your skin.
- Feel the warmth of the sun wrapping around your whole body.
- Feel the gentle breeze against your face, your cheeks, your skin.
- Feel the warm sand around your feet. It feels like a warm blanket covering your toes.

Listen to the waves breaking against the sand.

- You see the waves gently rolling onto shore.

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## Visualization - *continued*

Hear the seagulls passing over head.

- Watch as they fly by in their formation.

You hear some children playing in the distance. Laughing. And splashing in the water.

Then you turn your attention to the sound of the ocean. You notice the rhythm of the ocean sounds. The waves coming in and gently rolling back out.

You feel yourself getting calm and relaxed.

You take several deep breathes in to savor the sights, sounds, and sensations all around you.

The warmth that is swimming around your whole body. The sun's rays on your head. On your shoulders. The warm sand on your toes and feet. The cool breeze that matches the ocean's rhythm.

With each deep breath you are taking in the warmth of the beach and the sun and the cool of the ocean and the wind.

Each breath makes you feel more and more calm and relaxed. Notice how your body feels. The tension moves out of your shoulders. Your jaw relaxes. Any tension in the muscles seems to fade away as you savor this beautiful day on the beach.

(Stay quiet for one minute).

Now bring your awareness back to your breathing.

- Focus on your breathing.
- Bring your awareness back into the room.
- When you are ready, open your eyes.



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## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Sit or lie in a comfortable position.

Take several deep breaths. In, 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

If you want, you can close your eyes. Relax. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. When you breathe in, bring the air all the way down into your abdomen. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Notice your breathing. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Keep breathing in slowly and breathing out slowly.

Think about your feet and toes. Squeeze your toes and feet really tight. Count to 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Relax your feet. Do this two more times.

1  
2

Feel your feet relaxing.

Think about your legs. Straighten your legs, flexing your knees and all the muscles in your legs. Your calves, your thighs. Squeeze. Count to 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Relax your legs. Do this two more times.

1  
2

Feel the muscles in your knees and legs relaxing.

Think about your stomach. Tense up the muscles in your stomach like you are doing an abdominal crunch. Squeeze. Count to 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Relax your stomach. Do this two more times.

1  
2

Feel your stomach muscles relaxing.

Think about your hands. Make tight fists. Squeeze. Count to 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Relax your hands. Do this two more times.

1  
2

- continued

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation - *continued*

Feel your hands and arms relaxing

Think about your shoulders. Shrug your shoulders up to your head. Squeeze. Count to 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Relax your shoulders. Do this two more times.

1  
2

Feel your shoulders relaxing.

Think about your eyes. Tighten your eyes. Close them really tight. Count to 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Relax your eyes without opening them. Do this two more times.

1  
2

Feel your face feeling relaxed and calm.

Take 3 more deep breaths. Feel any left over tension leaving your body. Feel your body relax. Feel the calmness take over your body.

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## Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Younger Children

One way to bring your feelings back into the green is to use breathing and relaxation exercises. Have you ever heard an adult say that they need to count to ten or take a quick time out. These are all ways to calm ourselves down.

Spread out and get comfortable lying on the floor or sitting in a chair, whatever is more comfortable.

Take several deep breaths. In, 1 2 3, out 1,2 3.

- If you want you can close your eyes and relax.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.
- In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.
- When you breathe in, bring the air all the way down into your stomach. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.
- You can put your hand on your stomach to make sure that you are breathing all the way down to your stomach. Your hand should move up and down with your breathe. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.
- Keep breathing in slowly and breathing out slowly.

Feel your body relaxing. Your eyes are feeling heavier and heavier as you keep breathing all the way into your stomach. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Keep your breathing slow and steady while you pay attention to your feet. Pretend that you are standing on the beach with your feet in the water. You want your feet to sink deeper and deeper into the sand so you push your feet down as hard as you can. The waves come and wash over your feet. Push, squeeze your toes. Push your feet and toes down into the sand. Now relax your feet.

Here comes another wave. Now try one more time to push your feet into the sand as hard as you can. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Now relax your feet.

Keep breathing in 1, 2, 3 and out 1, 2, 3.

Now think about your legs. You are in line to get on a rollercoaster at an amusement park. You need to stand up as tall as possible to be able to ride the rollercoaster. Here comes the lady to measure you to see if you can get on the ride. Stretch your legs as long as possible. Make your legs super long. Stretch, stretch, stretch. You are almost tall enough, but not quite there. The lady walked away. Relax.

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## Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Younger Children - *continued*

Wait, the lady will give you another chance. She's going to re-measure you. Stand as tall as possible and stretch your legs. Keep stretching. Make your legs super long. Stretch. Make them long. And relax.

Now we are going to think about your stomach. Here comes a fuzzy baby bear. He doesn't see you and it looks like he is going to step right on your stomach. Make your stomach as hard as you can to hold the bear up. Keep it really tight. Hold it. Okay, relax. The bear went away.

Wait! Here comes another bear. This one is bigger. A daddy bear. You have to tighten your stomach again. Keep it really tight. So tight it will hold up the bear. Tight. Tight. And relax. The bear moved on so you can relax.

Now we are going to work on our hands and arms. Pretend that you have two small oranges, one in each hand. You have to squeeze the oranges to make orange juice. To do this you are going to have to clench your fists as tight as possible. Start squeezing the oranges. Harder. Keep squeezing. Keep going. Squeeze harder. Feel juice pouring out of the orange. Keep squeezing. Okay, there's no more juice left in the orange. Relax your hands.

We need more oranges. Squeeze the new oranges as hard as you can. Make a fist and squeeze your hand as tight as you can. Some juice is coming out, keep squeezing. Good job. Keep going. Squeeze as tight as you can. Keep going, you can do it. Squeeze. Phew. We are done making orange juice. Relax your hands. Let all the tension leave your hands and arms.

We made some delicious juice. Take a sip of the orange juice. Oh no! It's really sour. Yuck. Your jaw and face squeeze up because it's so sour. Keep squeezing your jaw. Ew. It's so sour. Squeeze your jaw to try to make it go away. Keep going. Ahh, okay. You got the sour taste out of your mouth.

Oh. Wow. Here comes a beautiful butterfly. He's coming over to you, flying around your head and, oh. He landed on your nose. Don't touch him with your hands, you might hurt him. Instead try to get him to move off of your nose by scrunching up your nose and face. Squeeze your face up and move your nose around. Wrinkle your face up really hard. And relax. Feel the muscles in your face relax.

It did not work, the butterfly is still there. His wings are tickling your cheeks. You've got to try again. Wrinkle up your face again. Squeeze it as hard as you can. Squeeze. Wrinkle. Squeeze. Move your nose around. Ah....that's better, he went away. Relax your face.

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Now just relax and focus on how your body feels. Your face was tight but now it's relaxed. Your fists were tight but now your hands feel open and free. Your stomach is nice and relaxed. Your legs and feet too. Your whole body feels relaxed. Whenever you feel your muscles get tight, you can pretend you are squeezing oranges or that a butterfly landed on your nose. This will help your whole body relax. You can open your eyes now, but stay relaxed. Calm and relaxed.

Adapted from Koeppen, A.S. (1974). Relaxation training for children. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling*, 9, 14-21.

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