

1. Guided Meditation: The Balloon

This guided meditation brings a visual component to a very simple deep breathing exercise. It can be used as a relaxation tool or to use if you are feeling worried, angry or overwhelmed. You can do this standing or seated.

1. Relax your body and begin to take deep inhales and slow exhales through the nose.
2. Start to take a slow, deep breath to fill your belly up with air, as if you're trying to blow up a big balloon. Expand your belly as much as you can.
3. Slowly let the air out of the balloon (through the nose) as you release the breath from the belly.
4. Encourage your children to feel their entire body relax each time they exhale, each time air is slowly being released from the balloon. You can even make a "hissing" noise to encourage them to slow down the exhale even more, "Like letting air out of the balloon."
5. Continue for several minutes.

If the child is younger, you can add a little more detail and fun to the exercise to keep them engaged. Young children, especially under the age of 6, love the extra movement when they're learning to bring awareness to their breath. Encourage them to stand up in a relaxed way and follow these steps:

1. Ask them to think of their favourite colour and picture a giant balloon of that colour in their mind.
2. Then have them take a slow, deep inhale through the nose, filling up their tummies with air as if trying to blow up a giant [their favourite colour] balloon. As an option, you can also have them stretch their arms open and overhead to represent expansion and the big balloon.
3. When their balloon is totally full, have them hold their breath at the top, and then you can "pop the balloon" for them (gesture finger to belly) and they can fall down as they exhale.

This one will likely elicit giggles and awareness of their breath.