

Tips for Relaxation

Tension and anxiety are common feelings after crises. These feelings can make it more difficult to cope with the many things that must be done to recover. Using relaxation exercises to calm yourself during the day may make it easier to sleep, concentrate, and have energy for coping with life. These exercises can include slow breathing, meditation, swimming, stretching, yoga, prayer, listening to quiet music, spending time outdoors. Here are breathing exercises that may help:

Adults and Teens

1. Inhale slowly (one-thousand one, one-thousand two, one-thousand three) through your nose or mouth, and comfortably fill your lungs.
2. Silently and gently say to yourself, "I'm filling my body with calm."
3. Exhale slowly (one-thousand one, one-thousand two, one-thousand three) through your mouth, and comfortably empty your lungs.
4. Silently and gently say to yourself, "I'm letting the tension drain away."
5. Repeat five times slowly.

Children (practice with your child)

Let's practice a different way of breathing that can help calm our bodies down.

1. I want each of you to think about your favorite color. Okay, we are going to breathe in through our noses or mouths. When we breathe in, we are going to think about our favorite color and the beautiful things you connect with that color.
2. Next, we will breathe out through our mouths. When we breathe out, we are going to breathe out the gray and the uncomfortable feelings that have been building up. Let out the air, slowly and quietly.
3. Let's try it together. Breathe in really slowly and inhale thinking about your favorite color and the beautiful things connected to this color, while I count to three. One, two, three. Good job. Now, while I count again, slowly let the air out while thinking about the color gray and all the unpleasant feelings. One, two, three. Great job. Let's try it together again. [Remember to praise children for their efforts.]

Tips for Families:

- Find a room where everyone can spread out and have his/her own space.
 - Some family members will want to lie down, others will want to sit. Some will want to close their eyes, and some will want to keep them open. Encourage everyone to find a way that feels most comfortable to them.
 - Take time to practice this when everyone is calm. That way, everyone will be better able to use the breathing exercise when they are feeling upset.
 - For young children, turn the breathing exercise into a game. Blow soap bubbles with a wand or blow cotton balls across a tabletop. Get creative and make it fun.
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