

Ways to Relax and Cope with Stress and Pain

For: School-Age Children



School-age children often feel stress from everyday things like homework, sports, friendships, and wanting to fit in. Medical visits or treatments can also cause stress and sometimes pain. You can support your child during both daily life and health care experiences using some of these suggestions.

Child Life Specialists

Child life specialists offer:

- Support for children of all ages about their feelings, thoughts, and questions.
- Information and materials to help you and your child learn about upcoming procedures and medical experiences.
- Coping resources and coping skills practice.
- Play sessions to learn more about your child and help them share their needs and feelings.

To contact a child life specialist:

Call: (816) 983-6870 or
Use the "Refer My Child" tab in Children's Mercy MyChart

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Breathing

Children can learn simple deep-breathing exercises to help their bodies calm down. Some options include:

- **Basic deep breathing:** Take a slow breath in, hold it for a moment, and then gently let it out.
- **Counting breaths:** Breathe in while counting to a certain number, hold the breath briefly, and then breathe out while counting again.
- **4-7-8 breathing:** Breathe in for **4 seconds**, hold for **7 seconds**, and breathe out slowly for **8 seconds**.
- **Flower and candle breathing:** Imagine **smelling a flower** while breathing in through the nose, then **blowing out birthday candles** while breathing out through the mouth.

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery involves your child using their imagination to focus on something instead of their stress. Guided imagery can be done by imagining and describing a favorite place or situation. Guided imagery can be led by you or your child. Things to imagine can include what the child may smell, the way a place would feel (hot/cold), how it might look, and what your child might hear.

Exercise

Exercise like walking, running, playing sports, and swimming are great ways to relax and deal with stress. Exercise can relieve tension in the body. Make sure your child takes breaks and follows any guidance from your doctor.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is done by squeezing and then releasing the different muscles in the body.

- Ask your child to scrunch up their nose and forehead and then relax them.
- Squeeze their shoulders, then hands (ball up into fists), then relax.
- This can be done for all muscle groups.

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Resources



Coping and Relaxation Tips - Children's Mercy

Websites



kidsrelaxation.com



cmkc.link/kids-coping-skills



innerhealthstudio.com



sesamestreet.org/toolkits



cmkc.link/guided-imagery



**Sesame Street Belly
Breathe song
cmkc.link/belly-breathe**



moodcafe.co.uk



cmkc.link/kids-health-stress

Apps

- **We Breathe: Take a Deep Breath**
- **Calm**
- **Smiling Mind**