

EASE at Home (Grades 4-7)

Strategies to help children cope with anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

Sometimes it's hard for adults to know what to say or do to ease a child's worries, especially during times of change and uncertainty. As the most important big people in their world, parents and caregivers can help children feel safer and soften the sharp edges of whatever is happening to make their worries grow.

Relaxation Skills: Calm Breathing

What is it?

Children are usually not aware that worries and other difficult emotions can 'show up' in their bodies as physical discomfort, such as headaches and muscle tension. Regularly practising fun relaxation exercises can help bodies and minds feel loose and calm and dial down stress and worries when they do arise.

How?

Practicing slow, deep breathing is one of the most effective ways to feel relaxed, centred, and focused. Encourage children to breathe slowly in through the nose, allowing the belly rise, hold for a few seconds, then slowly exhale through the mouth, causing the belly to fall. Repeat the cycle 5-10 times to start and build up to a few minutes for a more powerful calming effect. Add some fun by trying the following:



Imagine blowing up a balloon in your belly on the in-breath, then slowly letting it deflate on the out-breath

Pretend to smell a flower while breathing in, then blow gently to cool down a hot drink while breathing out



Use an app with guided breathing instructions, like the [Beathr App](#) from Kelty Mental Health or [Mindshift](#) from Anxiety Canada

Follow along with a video like this [Calm Breathe Bubble](#)



Hint: Calm breathing is best practiced regularly and when your child is already calm so they can remember how to do it when they feel upset. Learn to identify your child's triggers so that you can do some calm breathing together before things get out of hand. It's always easier to deal with strong emotions before they get too overwhelming.