

SKILL PRACTICES TO USE WITH COMFORT KITS

Feel Better Skill 1: Breathe To Relax

What to use it for: Worries, trouble sleeping, pain

What is it?:

When you control your breathing you control the body's response. Athletes, singers, and even movie stars use this all the time!

What you need:

There are a lot of tools that can help you with this: your lungs, your hand on your belly-button, blow on a pinwheel or bubbles, have a finger puppet resting on your belly, and find a comfortable place. You can use this tool without anything but yourself if you want.

How to do it:

- Imagine you have a balloon in your belly.
- Let all your muscles be soft, loose and comfortable.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose.
- Next, breathe out slowly through your mouth.
- Breathe out twice as long as you breathed in, making it feel very slow and comfortable.
- Experiment to see how long you can take to let the air out -you can slow down the "out" breath by breathing out through a straw or also by making an "s" sound as you exhale.
- Feel your belly get big like a balloon blowing up as you breathe in. If you like you can place your hand or your favorite stuffed animal on your belly button and feel it move up and down with the in and out breaths.
- As you slowly let the air out and your belly gets flat, imagine you are breathing out any uncomfortable feelings or stress.

When to use it:

- As often as possible, at least 2-3 times per day.
- Do this before the symptom starts, during the symptom, and after it is all finished.
- Do this to help you at other times-while you are helping your family, playing with friends, going to bed at night, etc.
- Do this any time you are feeling nervous, stressed, or upset.

Feel Better Skill 2: Catch the Relaxation Wave

What to use it for: Worries, trouble sleeping, pain

What you need:

Nothing but yourself and a comfortable place to sit or lay down. Sometimes it helps to have a squeeze ball or a finger puppet, or put a sticker on your finger or forehead or hand to see what happens!

How to do it:

This can take from 5 to 10 minutes, depending on how long you need it.

- Start with taking 5-10 slow, deep breaths
- Notice how your shoulders drop with each breath out
- Imagine with each breath out the muscles relaxing further down your body, like ice cream melting in a bowl. It's like a wave of relaxation!
- Every time you breathe out, tell the muscles in your body to relax. You may want to do this each muscle one by one, or your whole body all at once.
- Just remember with each breath out, you can loosen muscles of your neck, shoulders, arms, fingers, chest, ribs, belly, back, hips, legs, ankles, feet, and toes.
- Make the muscles in your feet and toes very, very tight. Hold them tight – tight – tight and count to 10. Then, let go of the tightness and feel the muscles in your feet and toes melt into relaxation.
- Next, do the same thing working up your entire body.
Your legs, thighs, knees, ankles
Back, Chest, Stomach
Arms, elbows, fists
Neck and shoulders (pull your shoulders up to your ears then let them drop comfortably)
- Forehead, eyes, nose, cheeks, and jaws.
- You will notice the difference between tight, stiff muscles and loose, relaxed muscles. After you are done, your muscles should feel like wet, loose noodles or a floppy teddy bear.

When to use it:

- Practice 2-3 times per day
- Any time you are feeling nervous, stressed or upset.
- Use this before medical exams including injections

You can use your squeeze ball as you do the progressive relaxation. Squeeze the ball each time you make your muscles go tight, tight, tight, and let go of your grip of the ball when you relax your muscles.

Feel Better Skill 3: Talk To Yourself!

What to use it for: Trouble sleeping and worries

What is it?:

A helpful way to calm the mind, relax the body, and become more aware of what your muscles are feeling like.

What you need:

Nothing but yourself and a comfortable place to sit or lie down

How to do it:

- Be in a comfortable, relaxing position either sitting or lying down while doing this practice.
- Take a couple of slow and deep belly breathes before beginning the phrases.
- Imagine the sensations in each phrase happening in the body as completely as possible. The phrases are meant to be repeated silently in your inside mind several times with your attention focusing on each different body area and allowing those pleasant, warm, relaxing sensations to develop. Imagine them actually happening in your body Repeat (say it in your mind) the following bolded phrases to yourself as many times as you would like. We suggest 3-6 times.
- **My arms are heavy and warm (remember: repeat this 3-6 times in your mind and imagine it happening and then move to the next phrase)**

- **My legs are heavy and warm**
- **My heartbeat is calm and strong**
- **My breathing is calm and relaxed**
- **My tummy is soft and warm**
- **My forehead is smooth and relaxed**
- Now notice how comfortable and balanced your body feels.
- Imagine yourself being healthy, strong, and happy. Remain in this deeply relaxed state as long as you like. When you are finished, breath deeply and slowly move your legs and arms.

When to use it:

- Any time you are feeling worried, stressed, or upset.
- Do this at night to help you sleep better.
- When you have medical exams.

Feel better Skill 3: Imagination Fun!

What to use it for: Worries, fatigue, pain, trouble sleeping

What is it?:

- This is a way to write your own story. You have an amazing brain! Your brain listens to what you are thinking about.
- Thinking about sad stuff makes you feel sad!
- Thinking about things that worry you will make you feel nervous.
- Thinking about your pain or frustration about not being able to sleep will just make you feel worse.
- Thinking of pleasant things will help you feel better and more comfortable

What you need:

This is a built-in tool you have right inside of you all the time. You don't really need anything else! If you want, you could use your favorite photos or pictures from books of things that you enjoy doing or places where you would like to be. Maybe you will use the finger puppet to tell you a story!

How to do it:

- Take 3-5 slow, deep belly breaths
- Close your eyes.
- Time for a journey in your imagination! Where would you like to go?
- Where would you rather be if you could be anywhere else in the world?
- Pretend that you are somewhere else. You can imagine yourself anywhere you would like to be.
- At a happy place with your family or best friends.
- Playing sports
- Listening to someone tell you a happy story.
- Listening to music.
- Playing with your cat or dog.
- In the future feeling healthy and having fun.
- Pretend to be there as though it was really happening...inside your mind.
- Imagine everything that makes this experience the way you want it to be.
- What do you smell?
- What do you taste?

- What do you hear?
- How does it feel when you touch something there?
- Notice how comfortable your body feels when you're imagining yourself in a place you like and doing something that you enjoy. . Imagination works best with your eyes closed, but after you've done it a few times, you'll see that you can also imagine with your eyes open. Because imagination happens inside your mind, you're the boss of it.

When to use it:

Any time you are uncomfortable or in pain, when you can't sleep, when you are nervous, stressed, or worried.

You are helping yourself to feel better.

Feel Better Skill 4: Write It Down or Draw It Out

What to use it for: Everything

What is it?:

Write about or draw about your life and experiences.

What you need:

A pencil and crayons

A notebook

Paper

How to do it:

Help yourself feel better by writing or drawing about your life and feelings.

.

Tell about things you have learned, both positive and negative.

When to use it:

Anytime, day or night!

- When you have things on your mind and would like to record them.
- When you want others to know what is going on with you.
- When you want to write your own life story.
- When you are bored.
- When you are nervous or upset about something.
- When you are excited or looking forward to something.
- When something BIG is about to happen or has just happened.

