

*Helping
you to help
your child*

Simple Breathing Strategies

6 strategies for parents, carers and other
supporting adults to try with their child



Breathing strategies can be a great way to take control and introduce a little calm


Introduction

Breathing strategies are a fantastic way to calm things down. When we take control of our breathing, it slows down the physical anxious response (so our heart rate slows and we start to feel a little calmer) and taking control of our breathing also sends a sign to our brain that things are okay, and we've got this.. so it's a win-win - both physically and psychologically.

The other great thing about learning a few breathing strategies is that if you're faced with an anxious child, they give you a go-to script to work through which can be a real help in moments when the child's anxiety has the potential to be catching. Roll out your favourite breathing strategy and allow the child to catch your calm instead.



Practising a breathing strategy alongside a child will calm down not just them, but you too.

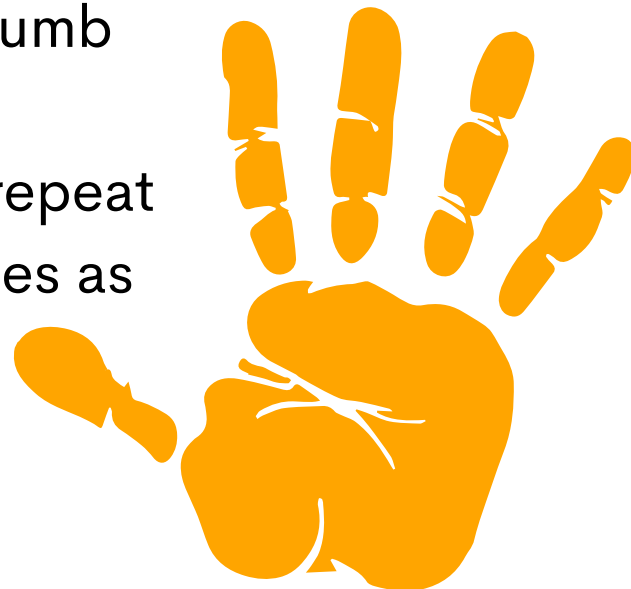


5 Finger Breathing

Five finger breathing is an absolute favourite of mine because it's so easy to do and even very young children can learn how to do it and it's nice and tactile too.



1. Put your hand out in front of you, fingers spread wide
2. Put the finger of your other hand at the base of your thumb
3. Slowly run your finger up your thumb, breathing in as you do so
4. Pause at the top of your thumb
5. Slowly run your finger down the other side of your thumb, breathing out as you do so
6. Pause at the base of your thumb
7. Repeat for all five fingers
8. Shake your fingers out and repeat the whole thing as many times as you need to



-2-

Floating Feather

In this breathing exercise, we imagine that we have a feather in the palm of our hand.

We hold our hand out in front of us and we try to blow the imaginary feather in the air and keep it floating.

You could try this with a real feather too if you liked, or anything that is small and light enough to be lifted with your breath, such as a leaf.

This works well as it can feel like fun and because it encourages us to breathe deeply which sends a signal to our nervous system to calm down.

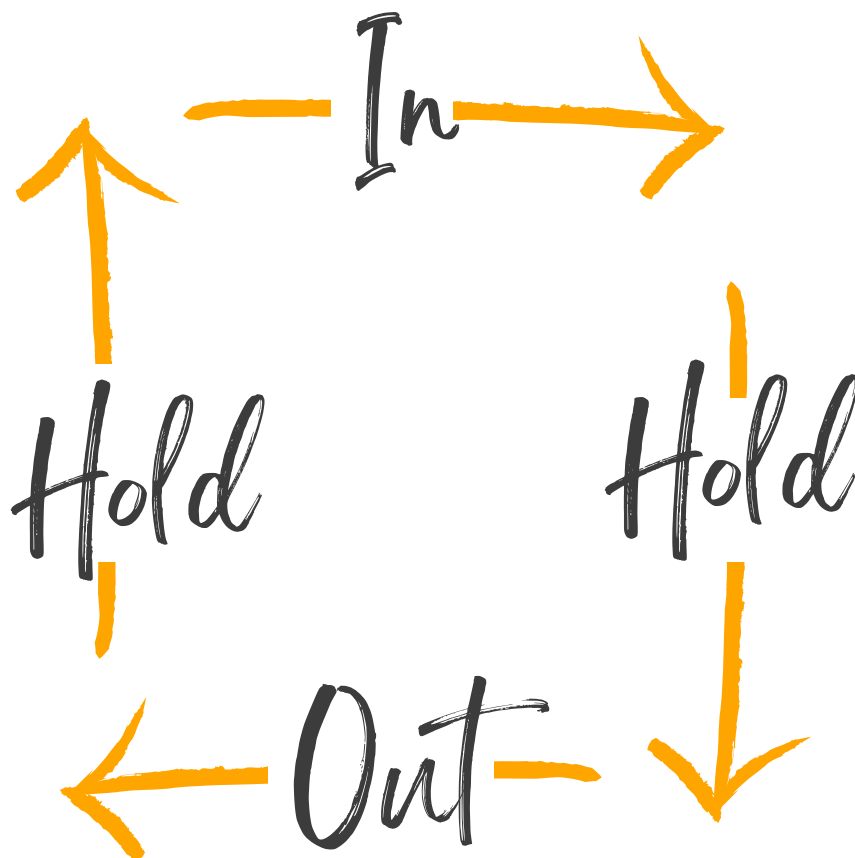


Box Breathing

Box breathing has four simple stages:

1. Breathe in for the count of four
2. Hold for the count of four
3. Breathe out for the count of four
4. Hold for the count of four

You can repeat as many times as you need to.





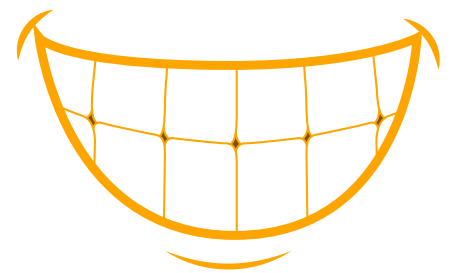
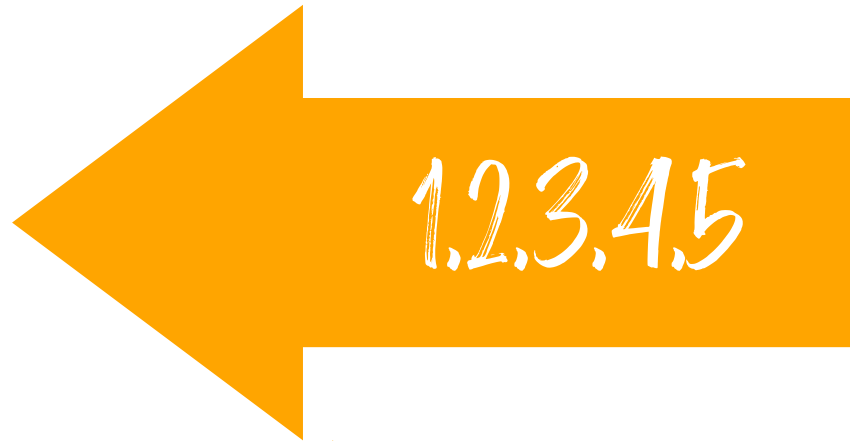
In for 5, Out for 7

This technique has even fewer steps than the others... just two.

We breathe in through our nose for the count of five

Then we breathe out through our mouth for the count of seven

It can help to try to breathe out every last drop of air we can feel in our bodies



Lion's Breath

This one is stolen from yoga and is especially popular with younger children:

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1. Breathe in through your nose
2. Open your mouth wide
3. Stick out your tongue as far as you can - as if you were trying to lick your chin
4. Do a big fast out-breath - as if you were trying to force your tongue out of your mouth
5. As you breathe out, make a big 'HA' sound - try to feel it coming right from your belly
6. Try to expel all of your breath in this one big 'HA' out-breath
7. Breathe normally for a few breaths then repeat

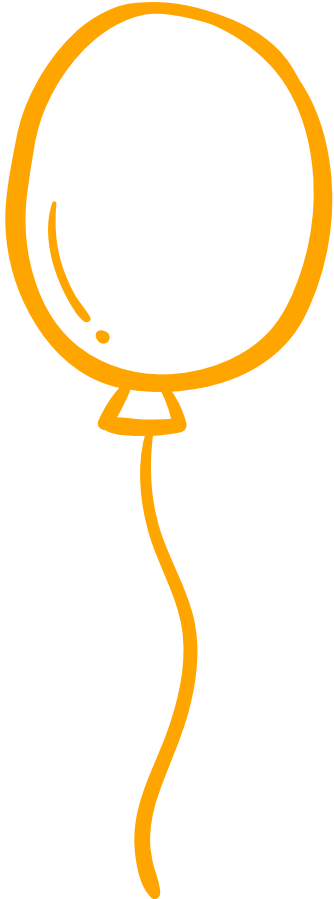


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Belly Balloon

This technique is a way to encourage diaphragmatic breathing; much loved by singers and actors, it's great for anyone trying to take control of anxiety or anger too:

1. Imagine there is a balloon right behind your belly button
2. Breathe in deeply to fill the balloon
3. Let your belly get big as the balloon pushes it out
4. Hold the balloon full of air for a moment
5. Then do a big long breath out and feel the balloon deflate and your tummy tuck back in
6. Repeat a few times



Works Best When

It's important that you find the way that works best for you and your child when trying out new strategies, but a few things that can really help include:

You and your child are a team, try to keep it fun

- Calm -

Try out new ideas at times of calm. Don't wait until you really need them to try them as it is super hard to learn new things when we're feeling stressed. When you first try these ideas, aim to keep it light-hearted and fun.

- Experiment -

Try out a range of different breathing strategies and figure out which ones work well for you and your child. Different people like different things, and some are good for different situations - e.g. you could do five finger breathing quietly in an exam - lion's breath might draw some funny looks!

- Practice -

You and your child will get better at these strategies if you work at them. The more you try them out and play with them, the more you'll be able to use them when it really matters.

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- Thank You! -

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Pooky x

