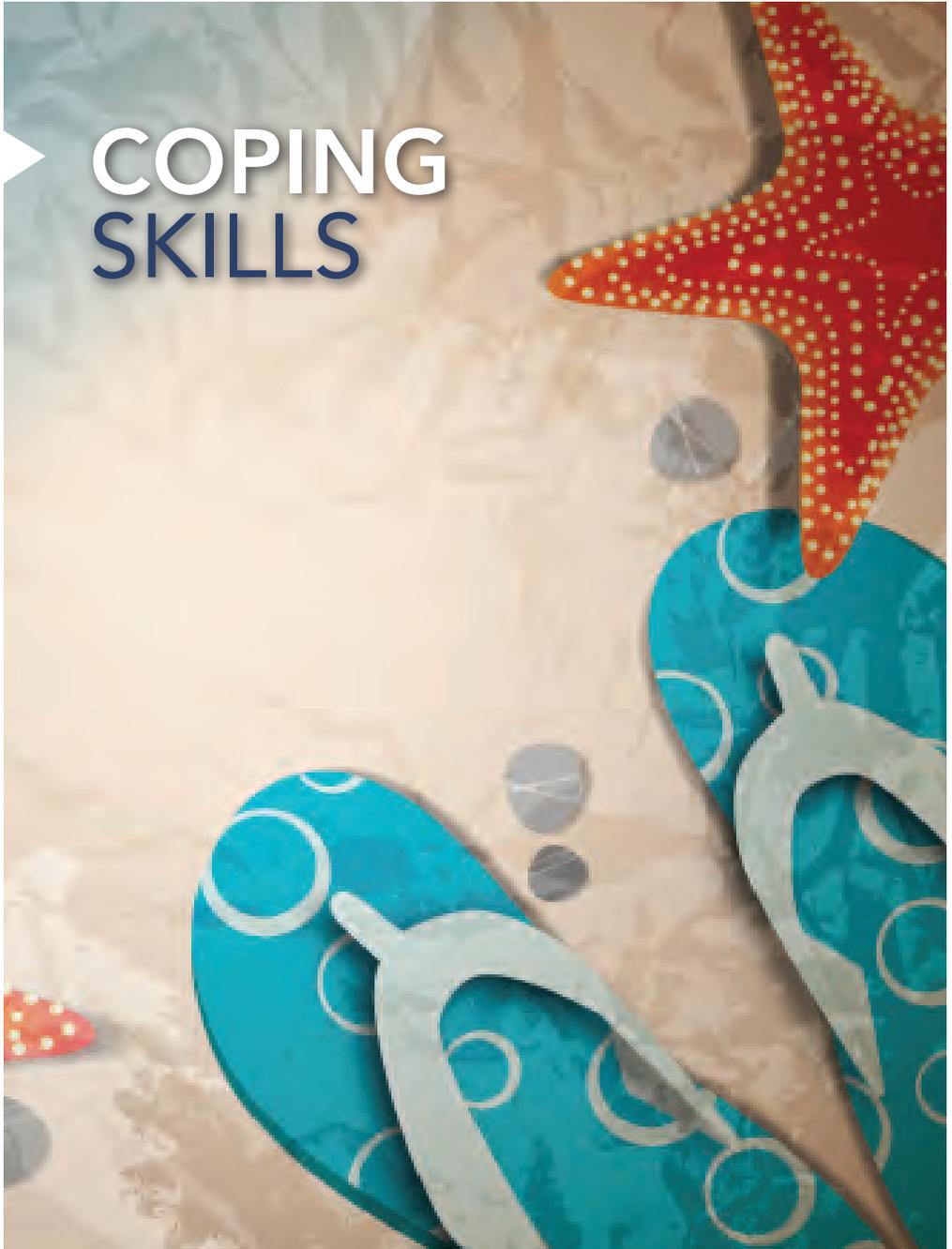


COPING SKILLS



BELLY BREATHING



Helps with: Pain, Sleeping, Nausea, Anxiety, Worries, Anger

What is it? Belly breathing is a special way of controlling your breathing that can help you relax, feel better and help your body to work its best.

What do I need? You really don't need any tools but yourself to make this work, but some things that may help are:

- A comfortable place.
- Your hand.
- Items such as a book, a pinwheel, bubbles or a harmonica.

See the tips section to see how these items can help.

When to use it?

- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry or are in pain. You can use it when you first notice these feelings, while you have these feelings or after the feelings to help keep them away.
- You can use it to help you feel more comfortable with many things.
- Try to practice 2-3 times per day. In order for this to work at stressful times, you must practice breathing techniques frequently when you are calm. By becoming aware of your breathing and learning to use belly breathing it will become more natural and automatic.

How do I do it?

1. Get into a comfortable position and let all of your muscles be soft and loose.
2. Imagine that your belly is a balloon and that right now it's deflated.
3. Put your hand on top of your belly.
4. Breathe in slowly through your nose while you count to 3. Feel the balloon fill with air as it raises the hand on your belly.
5. Breathe out slowly through your mouth while you count to 5. Feel the balloon get flat as the hand on your belly lowers.
6. Try to breathe out for longer (5-6 seconds) than you breathe in (3-4 seconds.)
7. Imagine that the uncomfortable feelings leave your body as you breathe out.

Tips:

- To check whether you are doing belly breathing or chest breathing, you may find it helpful to place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. The hand on your belly should be moving up and down while the hand on your chest shouldn't move at all.
- Some kids might want to lie down on the floor with a small toy, book or paper cup on their belly. With each breath, the object should move up and down.
- While you are exhaling slowly, you can:
 - Keep a pinwheel spinning for 3-4 seconds.
 - Blow out through the straw part of a pinwheel (take the top off) to help slow down your breathing.
 - Blow long, slow streams of bubbles from a bubble wand.
 - Hold a note while blowing on a harmonica for 3- 4 seconds.

How can this help me? Breathing calms the mind and produces a state of relaxation in your body. This is because when you breathe deeply, the message "calm down and relax" gets sent your brain. Then your brain sends this message to your body. Those things that happen when you are stressed, such as a fast heart rate and quick breathing, all decrease as you breathe deeply. For example, Belly Breathing relaxes your muscles, calms your nerves and helps release chemicals (called endorphins) in your body that reduce pain.

GUIDED IMAGERY



Helps with: Pain, Sleeping, Nausea, Anxiety, Worries, Anger, Fatigue

What is it? Guided Imagery is a tool that helps your body by letting your mind take you to healthy places that feel good. It uses your imagination to change your thoughts by focusing on your senses (sound, vision, smell, taste, touch, movement.) It's like daydreaming – when your mind begins to wander and you imagine that you are doing something fun. You can decide what to think about and what to imagine and the best part is that your brain will listen.

What do I need? The main things you need are your brain and your imagination. Other things you may use:

- A favorite memory or pictures of things you like doing or places you wish you could be.
- A favorite smell or scent.
- A CD with a visualization or imagery script.

See the tips section to see how these items can help.

When to use it?

- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry, worried or are in pain.
- You can use it during times you wish you could go or be somewhere else because you are uncomfortable.

How do I do it?

1. Close your eyes.
2. Take 3-5 deep belly breaths (see card #1: Belly Breathing.)
3. It's time to imagine you are going to your special place. Where would you like to go? If you could be anywhere in the world at this moment, where would you be? At the beach with family, out with friends, at a sports game, somewhere feeling healthy?
4. When you have picked out a place, picture yourself there. Through your mind, you can be at this place as if this were really happening.
5. Use all of your daydreaming skills and think about every little thing that makes this place and experience just as you like it.
 - a. What do you see?
 - b. What does it smell like?
 - c. What does it taste like?
 - d. What sounds do you hear?

- e. What do things that you can touch feel like?
f. How does your body feel as it moves (or rests) just the way you want it to?
6. Be aware of how comfortable your body feels when you are imagining yourself in this place. You may notice your breathing slow down and your muscles feel looser as your whole body starts to relax.

Tips:

- A favorite smell or scent can make your imagination activity more enjoyable and bring your special place to life. Using a special scent before or during the imagery activity can help you to feel even more comfortable and relaxed.
- Sometimes people find it difficult to do this imagination activity on their own. If this is the case for you, you may be able to use a photograph or a picture from a book or the computer to help jump start your imagination. It may be helpful to have someone, like your mom or dad, lead you through this activity. Or maybe you already have a CD that describes a special, relaxing place to you. You can listen to this CD and use it to help your mind picture yourself there. Or, if you are in the hospital, the Child Life department can loan you a CD.

How can this help me? Have you noticed that when you think about sad stuff you feel sad or when you think about things you are worried about you feel nervous or when you actually think about your pain, you hurt more? Fortunately, just like your body and brain listen to you when you are thinking about bad stuff you can start to think about good stuff to feel better. Usually when you think about good stuff, you start to feel better and more comfortable. It's like changing the channel on your TV to something you really want to watch or turning the volume up or down in your body to a level that is more comfortable for you. If you're sad or afraid, your mind can bring you to places that feel happy and calm. If you have pain, for example, your mind can help you picture yourself comfortable and relaxed. You can find the places in your mind where you're in control of your body and where you feel happy and relaxed.

JOURNALING



Helps with: Everything.

What is it? You can use a journal or computer to write about your experiences. It's a way to get your thoughts and feelings out. You can keep these writings to look back on yourself or to share with others. Or you can tear them up or delete them right away. It doesn't matter what you do because the most important part is just to release the feelings and better understand them for yourself.

What do I need? A piece of paper and a pen or pencil is all you need. However, other things you might want to use are:

- A special notebook.
- A computer.
- An audio or video recorder.
- Crayons or markers, stickers, pictures.
- If you are in the hospital, the Child Life department can provide you with a notebook, computer or crayons/markers and stickers.

See the tips section to see how these items can help.

When to use it?

- When you can't seem to get things off your mind.
- When you are feeling scared, nervous, upset, sad or angry about something.
- When you want to share with others about what is going on with you.
- When you are excited about something that just happened or is about to happen.
- When you want to encourage, help or inspire others.

How do I do it?

1. You can write, type, draw or even talk about your thoughts and feelings.
2. Be open and honest.
3. Consider writing about an upsetting emotional experience, especially if it is something that you haven't talked about before.
4. It is helpful to keep a balanced view, writing about both the positive and negative feelings you are having.
5. You can tell about the lessons or things you've learned through a particular experience. What would you want other kids who are going through the same thing to know? Who knows, maybe you or someone else might learn from your experience.

6. You can also talk about things you are looking forward to, things you are proud of, or goals for your future.
7. Try not to spend too much time writing about the details of the situation. Writing about your feelings is what really pays off. Really let go and explore your deepest thoughts and feelings about this experience. As you are writing, you may discover ways that this experience connects with past situations, feelings or relationships.
8. If you can, try to journal for about 15 minutes each day for 10 days and then twice weekly for the next month. You can write about the same experience for several days or about different emotional experiences each day.

Tips:

- Remember that at first you might find it upsetting to write about some topics or experiences. But those feelings will usually settle down within a day or two. Often, after only a few days of writing, many people find surprising and unexpected insights that can lead to important changes in the way you feel from day-to-day.
- A special notebook can hold all of your experiences. Place this somewhere you will always know where it is so you are never searching around the house for paper.
- If you don't like writing with a pen and paper, using a computer for keeping an electronic journal may be the way to go for you. You may also consider blogging (but remember, blogs are not private and you are sharing your information with the world.)
- Another option if you don't like writing with a pen and paper is to use an audio or video recorder for a media journal.
- Some people draw in their journal to express their feelings through art. If this sounds like you, grab some crayons, markers or color pencils and add drawings to your journal.
- You may want pictures, photographs or stickers to add to your journal entries to fully capture the experience in a way that is meaningful to you.

How can this help me? Getting your feelings out, as you can through journaling, can help you to better understand the problems you are dealing with and to find good solutions that can help you feel better. Did you also know that stress from any part of life (including school, friends, and family) has an effect on our physical health? Research shows that the effect of stress on our health is the biggest when these issues and feelings are not directly expressed. So, finding a way to “get your feelings out” cannot only help with your feelings but also with your physical health.