

# Practical Techniques to Help Children Cope with COVID-19



During this stressful time, you can teach your children coping techniques and model these techniques by practicing them when you and/or they are feeling overwhelmed.

**Schedule the self-regulation activities into your daily routine.**

**DEEP BREATHING** – Have your child take 3-5 slow, deep breaths. For younger children, they may benefit by imagining breathing in their favorite color and breathing out a color they define as less favorable. Or have them imagine smelling a flower and then blowing it away. When lying down, have your child place one hand on their heart and one hand on their stomach. Encourage them to notice how their body feels as they breathe in and out.

**COUNTING** – Have your child slowly count to 10. For older children, count backwards from 50 while inhaling on the even numbers and exhaling on the odd.

**PRESSURE** – Have your child squeeze both hands together or around a ball and hold. Then instruct them to let go and soften all muscles while they count to 5. Repeat 5 times. You may want to guide them in relaxing each muscle by naming each limb, etc separately.

Some children calm with a weighted blanket or containment: wrap your arms snugly around your child, but not around the face, and provide deep pressure.

You can also teach them to apply pressure to different parts of their body for relaxation. Guide them to use their hands to gently press on their head, arms and legs. Massage their legs and feet.



**MUSIC** – Have your child listen to soft or favorite music. Sing, chant or hum along.

**IMAGERY** – Ask them to picture a familiar place or activity. Guide your child to think about this place or activity as you discuss it in detail. Focus on what they typically see, feel, taste, hear, and smell. Always use a calm, slow voice.

**DANCE** – Provide opportunities for them to move their bodies to different kinds of music. Play with pausing the music and holding a pose while taking 5 deep breaths.

**OUTDOORS** – If possible, spend time in nature. Schedule walks outside into your daily routine.

**You may not see these skills work right away, but think of it like a sport. It can take some practice and repetition to see positive results – and – it can create healthy patterns for life.**