

Relaxation response

Adolescents practice simple mediation and breath awareness techniques to reduce their stress

 1/5

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 10 min

1

||| Facilitator says

"Is it hard to sit still and relax, even when you need to be quiet?" Discuss briefly.

Explain

It is normal to sometimes have trouble relaxing or sitting still. In particular, when we feel worried, excited, or angry we get an extra burst of energy, and our bodies want to release that energy.

2

Optional: Explain

The extra energy comes from a hormone called adrenaline. Adrenaline is a hormone that our body releases to give us extra energy when we need it, especially in situations when we feel that we might need to run away or protect ourselves. Adrenaline gives us energy for those situations, but when we have too much energy and no way to release it, it can build up in our bodies and cause us to feel stress.

3

||| Facilitator says

"There are a lot of ways to help yourself to feel quiet and calm. Today we are going to practice how to use your breathing to relax."

4

Ask the adolescents to lie down on the floor or ground on their backs, with some space around them. Give them a few minutes to get comfortable.

5

Give the following instructions at a slow, calm pace. Wait 10 to 30 seconds between instructions to give adolescents a chance to follow them, and to become aware of how they feel at each stage. Observe them. As they quiet down, make your voice calmer and leave more time between each instruction.

||| Facilitator says

- ▶ "Let your breathing slow down naturally. Notice that as your breath moves up and down, your stomach slowly rises and falls. Let your breath come in and out without forcing it."
- ▶ "While your breath is still moving in and out at its own slow pace, try to observe all of the places where your back is touching the ground. Notice your heels, the back of your legs, your back, your shoulder bones, your elbows, your hands, and the back of your head."

6

- ▶ “Let each part of your body rest into the ground. Continue to breathe slowly and naturally. As each breath leaves your body, allow it to release some of the tension from your muscles. Let your body rest more and more as the ground holds you up.”
- ▶ “Observe each part of your body, and try to release any tension as you exhale.”

Leave a few more minutes for adolescents to continue breathing and relaxing.

7

||| Facilitator says

“Open your eyes. In a minute we are going to sit up slowly. First wake up your arms and legs by stretching them. If you want, you can pick up your knees and bring them to your chin so you stretch your spine. Sit up very slowly.”

8

Ask the adolescents to stay sitting cross-legged on the ground.

9

||| Facilitator says

“How did it feel to use your breath for relaxation? Was it easy or difficult?”

Discuss:

- ▶ It can be easy because breathing is a natural way for the body to relax
- ▶ It can be challenging if adolescents are trying this relaxation technique for the first time or have a lot of distracting things to think about.
- ▶ Like any technique, it requires practice.

10

||| Facilitator says

“Could you use this technique for relaxing in other parts of your life?”

Discuss:

- ▶ It can help adolescents to calm down when they feel angry or anxious.
- ▶ It can help adolescents to fall asleep if they have trouble sleeping.

Environment

Indoor or outdoor space.

Supplies

None needed.

