

IN CARE OF KIDS

Guided Breathing and Imagery Script: Ways to Help Your Child Relax and Relieve Pain

Make yourself as comfortable as you can be...you can close your eyes if you want to. Usually, it's easier to focus on your breathing if your eyes are closed. As we go through this breathing and relaxation exercise, you will hear my voice and you will also hear many other sounds in the background. You may hear the phone ringing or equipment noises; you may hear people talking. Just let these sounds come and go, let them fade into the background, and listen to my voice as I help you relax.

To begin...

Let all of your breath out of your body...now it's easy to let your lungs fill up all by themselves. Notice how your lungs know exactly how much air to take in, how long to hold it, and how to automatically let your breath out. Follow your breath; follow it through your body. Track how each breath has its own timing and rhythm-your body knows how to breathe automatically. Think about the air as it moves through your nose. We seldom think about how the air feels, but feel it now. Notice how gently it is inside your nose and how it fills your nose completely. Keep thinking about your breath...think about how your breath breathes your body. It's an effortless, natural, easy, wonderful process.

When you breathe in the next time, let the air go way down toward your belly button if you can, let it push your belly button out a bit if that's comfortable for you. You can feel your tummy move when you breathe like this. It's a little like pouring water into a pitcher –the water goes to the bottom of the pitcher first and then fills up to the top, much the way your breath is going down toward your tummy first and then filling up to the top of your lungs. Think about your breath as you breathe in...and breathe out.

Notice now, with your attention on your breath, how the tension is beginning to go out of your body. Your muscles relax, becoming softer, looser, and more and more comfortable. Notice how some parts of your body may feel heavier and other parts may feel lighter – it's very interesting. Notice it all. Notice how your body is becoming warmer and pleasant feelings are getting stronger. You may notice that one part of your body is feeling particularly warm and that another part, maybe your arms, feel very heavy. Another part, I'm not sure which, feels good. It's so nice to just let go and go with the flow of your breath as the relaxation eases away any discomfort, any worries, further and further away.

Let your breathe out now, as your body settles down...down into a fluffy white cloud, soft, yet strong enough to lift you up and away from the bed, away from your pain and your discomfort. Everything you don't want remains down below – your aches, your pain, your worries, any sadness you may feel – as your body is lifted up in the cloud. You snuggle into the white cloud, pulling it over you like a blanket, feeling warm and good. Perhaps you feel like you are floating and if so, it feels very good. As you move along on the cloud, you move farther and farther away from the pain and discomfort, and closer and closer to a special place that you'd like to be right now. Think about that place and allow yourself to travel there in your imagination so that you're there.

I wonder what you see first...what are the special things around you that make this a favorite place? What do you hear? What are those familiar sounds that make you feel safe and happy and at peace? Is there a particular smell associated with your favorite place? If so, think about that smell; it helps you feel as though you're really there. What do you feel? Is there sun on your face or do you feel yourself sinking into soft pillows? What are the feelings that go with what you're doing in your special place? It's so peaceful in this special place. And the best part is that you can come back to your special place anytime you wish, simply by daydreaming about being there.

Let the memory of your special place begin to fade now and concentrate on the peaceful feelings in your body. Feel how relaxed your muscles are, how calm and peaceful you feel. When you open your eyes, you'll be feeling pretty good, filled with memories of your special place and wonderful good feelings in your body. You can open your eyes whenever you are ready.

Kuttner, L. *A child in pain*. Point Roberts, WA: Hartley & Marks Publishers, (1996). pp 116, 119-120. Used with permission.

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