

# A Family Guide to Reducing Anxiety and Promoting Resiliency

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## Introduction to the family guide to reduce anxiety

We are very excited that you have decided to initiate the conversation about anxiety in your home, to ensure that all family members can feel calm and build resiliency. While you are waiting for the Friends for Life Program this resource will be extremely valuable in giving your family information, tools and techniques to help build resiliency and pro social skills. In the past year, the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre has noticed an increase in demand for this anxiety prevention program. Unfortunately due to funding and human resource limitations the centre can only offer a certain amount of groups per year. This is why we have created this guide for families to give you a head start into learning techniques and strategies for coping with anxiety. We hope that you find this guide insightful and helpful.

Please know that at any point if you or one of your family members is going through crisis or requires immediate support you can call our centre's counselling intake line at 613-591-3686. If you are trying to call after 4:30 pm, you can call the Mental Health Crisis Line at 613-722-6914 or the Distress Centre at 613-238-3311. For more information on the other services offered at the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre please follow the website link below.

[www.wocrc.ca](http://www.wocrc.ca)

You have probably noticed that the table of contents and the guide you are about to use is colour coordinated. We have created these dividers to make it easier for families to travel through the manual in order to find the support required. We do recommend that families using this guide for the first time follow the sequential order. This is especially important for the activities portion of the manual. Most of the activities build on one another, and are presented in a best practice order.

If you find this guide helpful and wish to support more of these initiatives please follow the website link below to donate funds to Children and Youth programs of the WOCRC: <https://www.canadahelps.org/dn/15600>

If you have any questions throughout your reading or activities please feel free to contact our Children's Community Developer, Colleen, by email at [taylor@wocrc.ca](mailto:taylor@wocrc.ca) or by phone at 613-591-3686 x 228.

# What is Anxiety?

**Anxiety** is a natural state of anticipated fear or actual distress. Every child or adult feels anxiety at some point in life. Anxiety has a purpose. It acts as the body's alarm system. It warns us when there may be a threat. Our body thinks there are only three choices: to fight the threat, to flee from the threat, or to freeze when faced with the threat. Anxiety usually causes a feeling of worry or unease. It may also cause sweating or a faster heartbeat. Some anxieties are a normal part of growing up. They usually pass. For example, babies might not like being handed to strangers. Toddlers may get upset when left alone in a dark room. These anxieties are normal. Children usually outgrow them. Anxiety becomes a concern if it interferes with the child's daily activities and their enjoyment of life. <sup>1</sup>

**Why Are Some Children More Anxious?** We can never say with 100% certainty what exactly is causing a child to be anxious. There are so many factors that could be contributing to anxiety, factors that are internal in the child (e.g. genes) and factors that are learned, or experienced (e.g. a scary life event). Research has identified particular conditions that can increase a child's overall vulnerability, or 'risk' to developing anxiety – these are called "Risk Factors". Below are some examples of common conditions/risk factors:

**Temperament:** Some children are born with a predisposition to be more sensitive to stimuli. These children may startle easily, feel more intensely, and be more difficult to soothe. They may be cautious and be more cautious and need more time to warm up to new situations. Children with this temperament may be more naturally prone to worrying and feeling anxious.

**Life Events:** Some life experiences require changes to a family system that can contribute to higher levels of anxiety in some children. Some examples are: a move, a new sibling, a new school, death of a loved one, parental divorce.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Feldman, MD, FRCPC; Patrick J. McGrath OC, PhD, FRSC; Katharina Manassis, MD, 2014

**Childhood trauma:** Children who experience a trauma (either a single incident like a car crash, or more chronic trauma such as witnessing repeated violence in the home) are more likely to experience an anxiety disorder, now or in the future. However, experiencing a traumatic event does not necessarily mean that a child will be ‘traumatized’; under supportive conditions, many children can ‘bounce back’ and show resiliency.

**Family genetics:** Research shows that anxiety can run in families<sup>2</sup>.

## Pause, Think, Express

Medical definitions of anxiety are useful for understanding the physiological and social underpinnings of psychological struggles. However, they are often difficult for children to understand, and do not always match up with their experiences of anxiety. As a result, children can be left feeling like their own definitions are ‘wrong’ or do not matter, when, in fact, their definitions give a critical insight into *what* is happening and *why*.

Below are a few examples of how you might go about encouraging your children to express their anxiety in their own terms. Be patient, and allow them to use whatever tools feel the most familiar or useful.

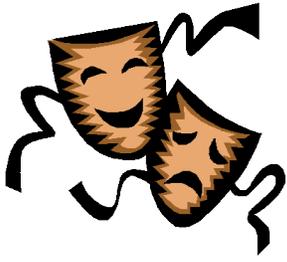


**Spell it Out:** Take a few minutes to help them write down/speak the feelings they associate with their anxiety. See how creative they can get with it: for instance, instead of having them write down that they get a headache, see if they can express what that headache feels like. Ex: “It feels like there is a thunderstorm in my head.”

**Draw it Out:** Some children are better at expressing their feelings through pictures rather than words. If your child has difficulty with words, provide some art supplies and see if your child can draw some pictures that represent how they feel when they are anxious.



<sup>2</sup> B.C. Friends for life Parent program ; <http://www.earlyyears.friendsparentprogram.com/why-are-some-children-more-anxious>

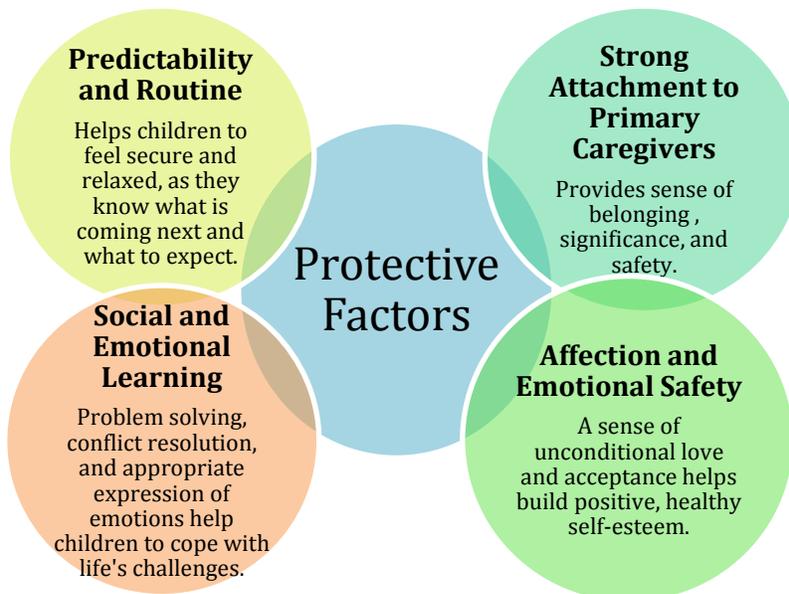


**Act it Out:** Write down a bunch of scenarios that your children find themselves in everyday (at school, in the playground, at a sports or arts event, in the kitchen, etc.) and have them act out with bodily or facial gestures how they ‘feel’ in that particular situation. Help them to identify what physical symptoms are occurring when they are in that scenario (ex. When they’re about to give a class presentation, perhaps their whole body gets tense). Alternatively, they can use the How do I Feel Right Now chart on page nine to point out what face they associate with each scenario.

**Play it Out:** If your child is musical or enjoys playing music, have your child identify what her feelings ‘sound’ like. For instance, when she feeling calm, she might say that she ‘sounds’ like a flute or a harp; if he is feeling sad or depressed, he might sound like a tuba; if she is feeling stressed, she might sound like a violin bow scraping across strings really fast. If you have instruments at home, get him to play what his feelings sound like on different instruments. If you don’t have instruments, allow your child to use Youtube videos to select instruments or songs that match his different feelings.



## Protective Factors<sup>3</sup>



Parents can go a long way to help support their children in taking small risks and learning that anxiety can be coped with. This type of parenting style is just one of many factors that can help protect children from developing anxiety. Taken as a whole, these are known as “**protective factors.**”

<sup>3</sup> Factors compiled by B.C. Friends for life Parent program ; <http://www.earlyyears.friendsparentprogram.com/video/key-protective-factors>

## Pause, Think, Express

Nobody is perfect, and life is sometimes going to interfere with your ability to provide a truly 'protective' environment. However, it is important to make note of what changes both you and your children can make in order to create a safe space in which anxiety can be expressed and managed in healthy ways.



**Family Challenge Jar** Take note of the different 'protective factors' outlined above. Sit down with your family and brainstorm different 'challenges' that relate to these protective factors and that you can work on together (ex. 'When we are frustrated with somebody this week, we will take a deep breath and speak with them calmly instead of raising our voices or getting angry.') Write these challenges on strips of paper, fold them up, and place them in a jar. At the beginning of the week, before everyone leaves the house, have someone pick a piece of paper from the jar and make that your family's challenge for the next seven days. Make sure you discuss how the challenge went at the end of the week!

## Learning the Facts about Anxiety

**1. Anxiety is NORMAL.** Everyone experiences anxiety at times. For example, it is normal to feel anxious when on a rollercoaster, or before a job interview.

**2. Anxiety is ADAPTIVE.** It is a system in our body that helps us to deal with real danger (for example, anxiety allows us to jump out of the way of a speeding car) or to perform at our best (for example, it motivates us to prepare for a big presentation). When you experience anxiety, your body's "fight-flight-freeze" response (also called the "adrenaline response") is triggered. This prepares your body to defend itself.

**3. Anxiety is NOT DANGEROUS.** Although anxiety may feel uncomfortable, it is not dangerous or harmful to you. Remember, all the sensations you feel when you are anxious are there to protect you from danger, not hurt you!

**4. Anxiety DOES NOT LAST FOREVER.** When you are anxious, you may feel like the anxiety is going to last forever. But, anxiety is temporary and it will eventually decrease!

**5. Anxiety is MOSTLY ANONYMOUS.** Most people (except those close to you) cannot tell when you are anxious because it does not show on your face.

**6. Anxiety CAN BECOME A PROBLEM.** Anxiety is a problem when our body reacts as if there is danger when there is no real danger. It's like having an overly sensitive smoke alarm system in your body!

**7. Anxiety problems are COMMON.** One-in-ten adults suffer from anxiety problems.

**More on Fight-Flight-Freeze:** Our body's natural alarm system (the fight-flight-freeze response) can be activated when there is a real danger, such as coming across a bear when hiking in the woods. In this case, you may flee (e.g., run away from the bear), freeze (e.g., stay still until the bear passes), or fight (e.g., yell and wave your arms to appear big and scary). But this response can also happen when something simply feels dangerous, but really isn't, such as giving a presentation in front of your classmates. For example, you may feel jittery, on edge, or uncomfortable. You may snap at people (fight) or have a hard time thinking clearly (freeze). These feelings can become overwhelming enough to make you want to avoid doing the presentation (flight). Many people stop doing things or going places that make them feel anxious. Can you think of some ways you may fight, flight, or freeze because of your anxiety?

**\*\*You can write the answers to these questions on the lines provided, or you can discuss them as a family – whatever method is most comfortable.\*\***

**When have you fought because of your anxiety?**

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**When have you run away because of your anxiety?**

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**When have you frozen up because of your anxiety?**

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Anxiety is like a smoke alarm system. A smoke alarm can help to protect us when there is an actual fire, but when a smoke alarm is too sensitive and goes off when there isn't really a fire (e.g., burning toast in a toaster), it is rather annoying. Like a smoke alarm, anxiety is helpful and adaptive when it works right. But, if it goes off when there is no real danger, it is not only scary, it is also very exhausting.

However, we DO NOT want to get rid of the alarm (or eliminate anxiety) because it protects us from danger. We want to fix it (i.e., bring the anxiety down to a more manageable level) so it works properly for us!<sup>4</sup>

***EXTRA VIDEOS***

***What is stress?*** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s93ywqFa6CM>

***Hooked on stress for kids:***

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yEhMFsv8AA>

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3 Anxiety BC : <http://www.anxietybc.com/resources/anxiety.php>

## Relaxation Activities to do at home

The *How Do I Feel Right Now* document is a great tool to help you develop emotional competency within your child and family. **Emotional competency** helps children develop empathy skills and also helps them acknowledge different feeling and how they relate to different situations. We would suggest that the family prints the document below and posts it in a common area in your home (i.e.: fridge, home foyer, living room). Each family member will then need a magnet, preferably different ones. You can then ask each family member at different times of the day to put the magnet on the feeling they are feeling at that moment (could be before leaving in the morning, when arriving home, before dinner, before bed time). The parents can then facilitate a conversation around the feeling posted, by asking some of the questions below. It is highly encouraged that the whole family participates in this activity, especially the parents and/or caregivers. By doing so the children will see that this activity is normal and safe for them to participate in.

**How are you feeling right now?**

**How is your body telling you that you are feeling this way?** Parents might be looking at how to relate the emotion to body cues at this point. (Butterflies in the stomach, red cheeks, headache, yawning, and etc.)

**What happened before you were feeling this way?** (This question will help them relate events and behaviours to their feelings)

**How can I help you feel better?** (As a parent you want to make sure that your child develops their own coping mechanisms. We can suggest and educate them on different strategies that work for us, but ideally the child will find strategies that work well for his or her unique body)

# HOW DO I FEEL RIGHT NOW?



Aggressive



Angry



Anxious



Ashamed



Bashful



Bored



Cautious



Confident



Confused



Curious



Depressed



Determined



Disappointed



Disbelieving



Disgusted



Ecstatic



Embarrassed



Enraged



Envious



Exasperated



Exhausted



Frightened



Frustrated



Grieved



Guilty



Happy



Hopeful



Hurt



Indifferent



Interested



Jealous



Joyful



Lonely



Loved



Loving



Miserable



Optimistic



Overwhelmed



Pained



Puzzled



Regretful



Relieved



Sad



Satisfied



Shocked



Shy



Smug



Sorry



Stubborn



Stupid



Surprised



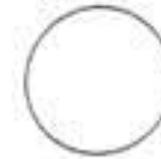
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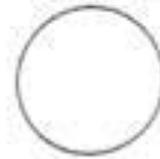
Thoughtful



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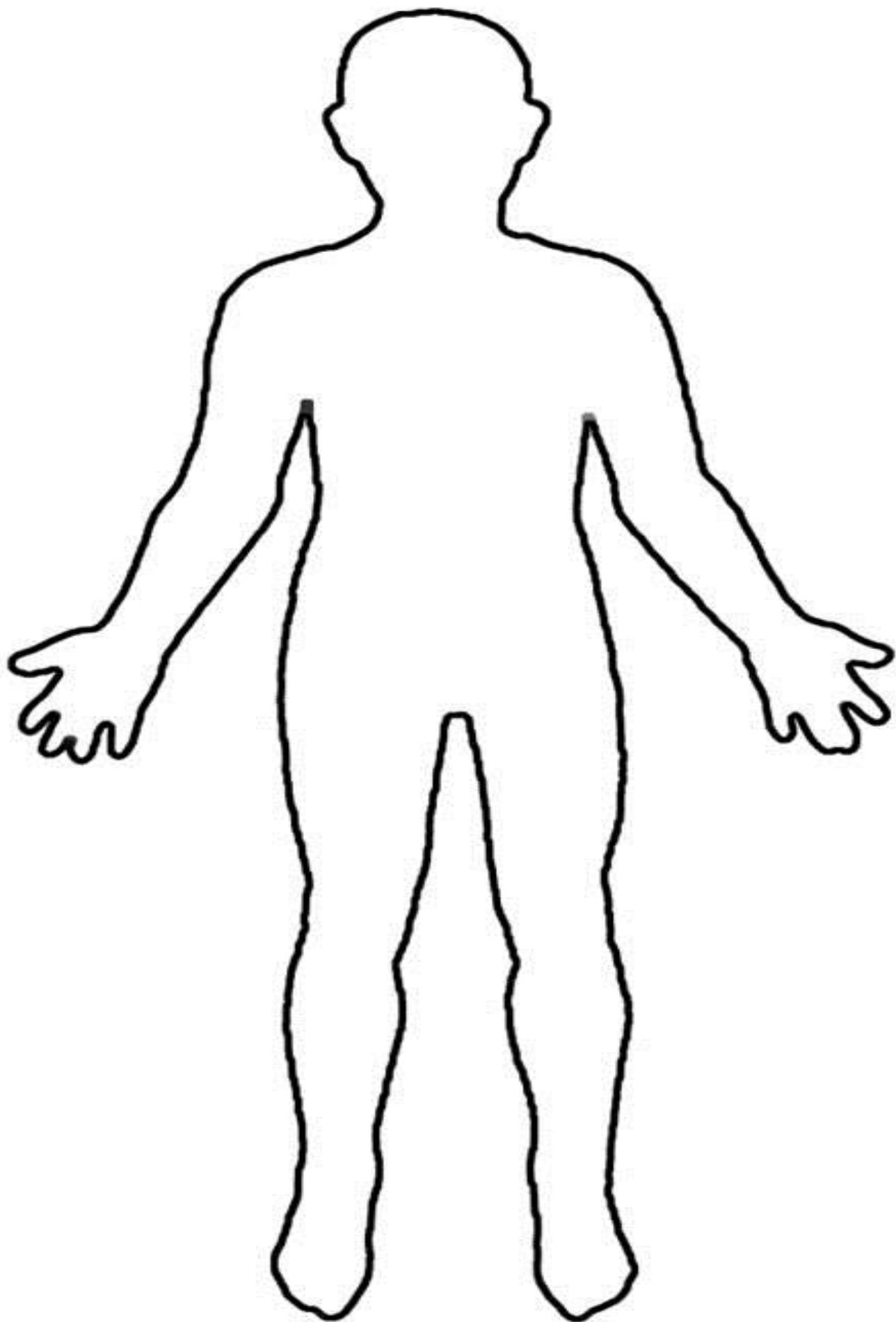


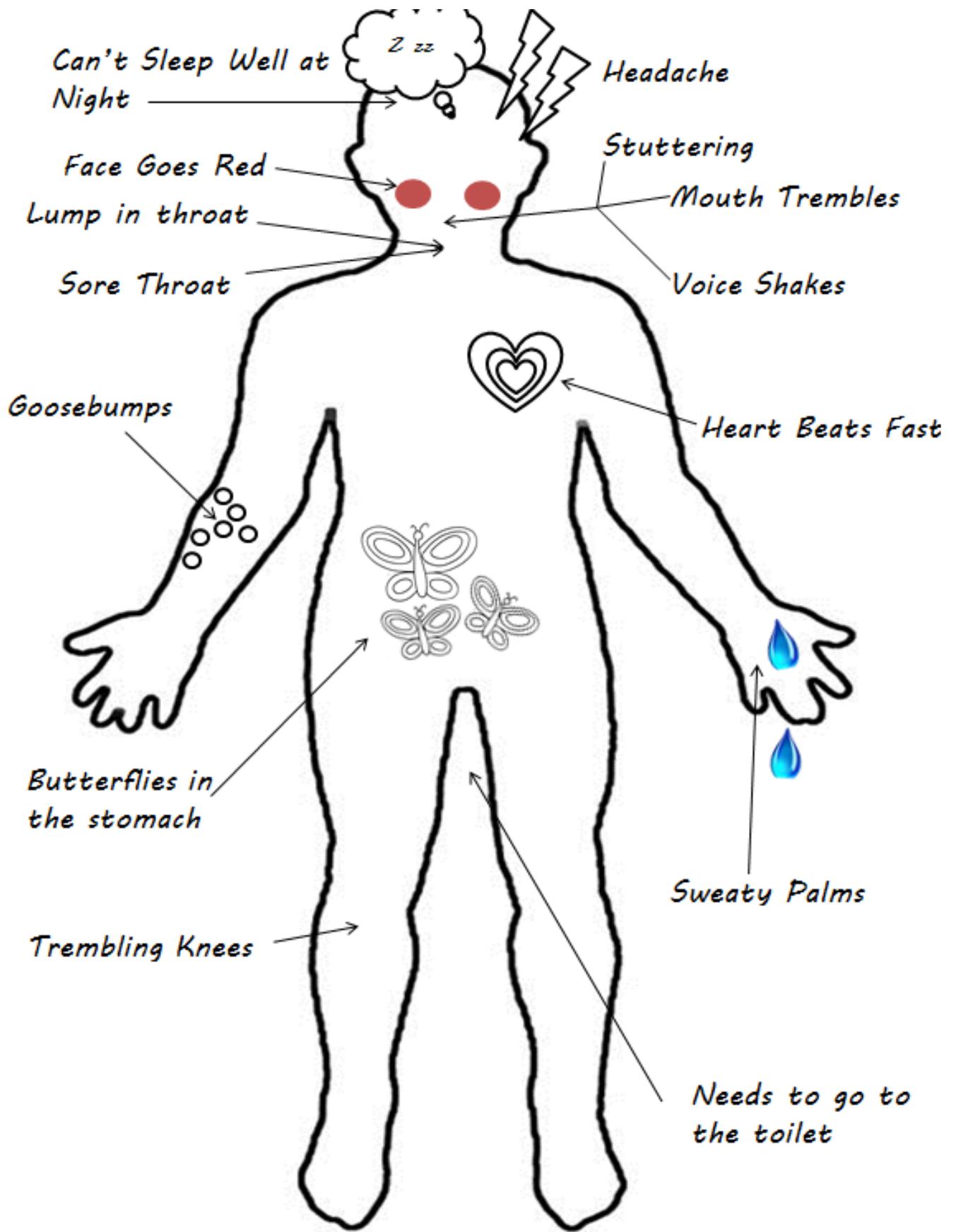
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## Body Cues

Our bodies give us clues to help us figure out HOW we feel. These are called **body cues**. They are very important in understanding our feelings and in coping with them. When we feel the body cues kicking in we should use our strategies to cope with our feelings in a much easier and faster way. For this exercise you will need family members to identify stressful events (leaving the house in the morning, sleeping in the dark, going to new places, etc.) and then get them to point out how it makes their body react, by drawing the body cues on the activity sheet below. The second activity sheet has many great examples of different body cues. This will help the family members to **connect different body cues to stressful events**. You can follow this activity by saying that we can help our bodies feel calmer and better and make the body cues go away by relaxing.

The next activities are all about relaxation. If your child wakes up one morning saying that he or she has a belly or headache, this might be a great way to inform them that this is their bodies' way of telling them something. This can help facilitate many discussions with your children. Be creative and try to come up with many body cues. Let your children explore on the sheet by drawing different things bodies can do when reacting to different emotions. A variation of this activity could be that you ask family members to draw what happens to other people's bodies when they go through stressful events.





## Breathing

**Deep breathing** is one of the best yet most overlooked strategies for lowering stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. Those simple things that happen when you are stressed, such as increased heart rate, fast breathing, and high blood pressure all decrease as you breathe deeply. Below, you will find really great videos explaining the benefits of deep-breathing. Remember to make this fun and exciting for the family. Maybe when you practice deep-breathing, you can pretend to blow out 100 birthday candles. Maybe you can pretend that you are blowing pinwheels, or that you are a fire-breathing dragon. Or you could even try blowing bubbles with soap through a wand or with chewing gum. Make this exercise creative and exciting, and soon the simplest activity can be one of the most exciting ones.

Breathing 1 : [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcruTc\]ksZ4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcruTc]ksZ4)

Breathing 2 : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gx0pdM4euBw>

Breathing 3 : [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3sYDYDRb\\_4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3sYDYDRb_4)

## Milkshake Breathing

For this exercise, you will need a glass half-filled with water/milk and a straw for every family member participating. Be ready for a mess. This activity is all about having fun and giving the old breathing exercise a fun twist. Here are the steps for this exercise:

1. Breathe slowly in through your **nose**.
2. Then slowly breathe softly out of your **mouth** through your straw (like you are blowing SMALL bubbles in a drink!)
3. Do enough milkshake breaths to calm down and feel relaxed!!

\*You can mix it up by asking family members to see who can make the most bubbles in the glass, or to see who can blow small, controlled bubbles softly for the longest. Or feel free to create your own family challenge. This is a great exercise to do at meal or snack time.

## Story Massage

**Story massage** involves the pairing of simple massage movements with words or ideas that eventually build a complete story. Research shows that this form of massage improves calmness and concentration and increases self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-esteem.<sup>5</sup>

Here are just a couple of story massage ideas for you and your family to try.

### Pizza Massage

With your family members, form pairs and make pizza on each other's backs in the form of a massage:

- Knead the dough with the tip of your fingers, as if you were squeezing a ball with the inside of your hands.
- Smooth on some tomato paste gently with the palm of your hands.
- Sprinkle on cheese with the tip of your fingers.
- Add ingredients of choice – pineapples, ham, olives and much more with the tip of your thumbs on your partners back.
- Put the pizza in the oven. To do this put both palms together and rub them until they feel really warm. When they do put the warm hands on your partners back
- Take the pizza out of the oven when ready and cut it in pieces. For this step do light karate chops on your partners back
- Last but not least taste the pizza and switch partners.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.storymassage.co.uk/story-massage/](http://www.storymassage.co.uk/story-massage/)

## Weather Massage

Tell this story as you perform the movements of the massage. You can either follow the suggestions in the brackets or make up your own movements.

- **Once upon a time, there was a big yellow sun...**(With one hand on the shoulder, make a clockwise circle on the back with the other hand)
- **...That warmed up the whole world** (Using one hand or both, draw rays to the side)
- **But look, clouds appear and cover the sun** (Make small circles with finger pads all over back)
- **Then the wind comes and blows harder...and harder.... And harder** (Begin at shoulder and make “tornado like” strokes with finger pads and palms)
- **And then came the lightning** (Make sharper strokes on back with fingertips)
- **... And thunder** (Clap on back with cupped hands)
- **Then came the rain** (Begin at shoulders, dance with fingertips down the back)
- **And it rained harder....and harder** (Same as above except faster)
- **Until the rain turned into hail...and more hail** (Play with your fingertips and back of hands, harder and faster)
- **Then the hail turned into snow, and everything was white and beautiful** (Push softly and slowly all over back with palms)
- **And the only thing to see was a cat, climbing up the roof of the house, making paw prints** (Use knuckles or palms; roll up the back first one side and then the other, cover whole back)
- **Finally came a thick fog and everything become very still** (lay hands gently on back)
- **Until the sun came out and warmed up the whole earth once again!** (Slowly draw one big circle and take hands away)

## Guided Relaxation

The purpose of this peaceful place relaxation script is to relax your mind and guide you to imagine your own peaceful, safe place. This place will be an imaginary area that you can visualize to help calm and relax your mind when you are feeling stressed.

Begin by setting aside a few minutes so that you can relax without having anything else you need to focus on. Find a comfortable position.

For the next few moments, focus on calming your mind by focusing on your breathing. Allow your breathing to center and relax you. Breathe in.... and out.

In..... out.....

In.... Out.....

Continue to breathe slowly and peacefully as you allow the tension to start to leave your body.

Release the areas of tension, feeling your muscles relax and become more comfortable with each breath.

Continue to let your breathing relax you....

Breathe in....2...3...4.... hold....2.....3..... out...2...3....4..... 5

again....2.....3....4....hold....2.....3.... out...2...3....4.... 5

Continue to breathe slowly, gently, comfortably.....

Let the rate of your breathing become gradually slower as your body relaxes.

Now begin to create a picture in your mind of a place where you can completely relax. Imagine what this place needs to be like in order for you to feel calm and relaxed.

Start with the physical layout of the place you are imagining..... where is this peaceful place? You might envision somewhere outdoors.... or indoors..... it may be a small place or large one..... create an image of this place.

(pause)

Now picture some more details about your peaceful place. Who is in this place? Are you alone? Or perhaps you are with someone else? Are there other people present? Animals? Birds? Imagine who is at your place, whether it is you only, or if you have company.

(pause)

Imagine even more detail about your surroundings. Focus now on the relaxing sounds around you in your peaceful place.

Now imagine any tastes and smells your place has to offer.

Imagine the sensations of touch... including the temperature, any breeze that may be present, the surface you are on.... imagine the details of this calming place in your mind.

Focus now on the sights of your place - colors, shapes.... objects.... plants..... water..... all of the beautiful things that make your place enjoyable.

To add further detail to this relaxing scene, imagine yourself there. What would you be doing in this calming place? Perhaps you are just sitting, enjoying this place, relaxing. Maybe you imagine walking around.... or doing any other variety of activities.

Picture yourself in this peaceful place. Imagine a feeling of calm..... of peace..... a place where you have no worries, cares, or concerns.... a place where you can simply rejuvenate, relax, and enjoy just being.

(pause)

Enjoy your peaceful place for a few moments more. Memorize the sights, sounds, and sensations around you. Know that you can return to this place in

your mind whenever you need a break. You can take a mental vacation to allow yourself to relax and regroup before returning to your regular roles.

In these last few moments of relaxation, create a picture in your mind that you will return to the next time you need a quick relaxation break. Picture yourself in your peaceful place. This moment you are imagining now, you can picture again the next time you need to relax.

When you are ready to return to your day, file away the imaginary place in your mind, waiting for you the next time you need it.

Turn your attention back to the present. Notice your surroundings as your body and mind return to their usual level of alertness and wakefulness.

Keep with you the feeling of calm from your peaceful place as you return to your everyday life.

## Mind Masters

A special thank you to Terry Orlick, who created and generously provided us with the MindMasters 2 Programs to share with you! To learn more about Terry Orlick and Positive Living Skills visit Positive Living Skills on Facebook! [MindMasters 2](#) is a research-based program that teaches simple and concrete techniques to help children manage stress and frustration, relax fully and develop a positive perspective. The program below was created by the Child and Youth Health Network of Eastern Ontario. These skills may be incorporated into existing children's services, such as therapeutic, educational and recreational services or used by parents at home. You will find two links below. The first are the vocal recordings to guide you through the activities, and the second link will explain each activity and their learning outcomes.

Mind Masters CD : <https://sites.google.com/site/mindmastersproject/music>

Mind Masters Activities:

[http://media.wix.com/ugd/ca463f\\_fc76eeb786aa43d7930ac036cb74d551.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/ca463f_fc76eeb786aa43d7930ac036cb74d551.pdf)

# Gradual Muscle Relaxation

## Introduction

These gradual muscle relaxation exercises will help you to learn how to relax when you're feeling up-tight and help you get rid of that butterflies-in-your-stomach kind of feeling. They're also kind of neat because you can learn how to do some of them without anyone really noticing. In order for you to get the best feelings from these exercises, there are some guidelines that you can follow. First, you must try to do exactly what the text says, even if it seems kind of silly. Second, you must try hard to do what the text says. Third, you must pay attention to your body. Throughout these exercises, pay attention to how your muscles feel when they are tight and when they are loose and relaxed. And fourth, you must practice. The more you practice, the more relaxed you can get. Get as comfortable as you can in your chair. Sit back, get both feet on the floor, and just let your arms hang loose. Now close your eyes and try not to open them until I say so. Remember to follow the instructions very carefully, try hard, and pay attention to your body. Here we go.

## Hands and Arms

Pretend you have a whole lemon in your left hand. Now squeeze it hard. Try to squeeze all the juice out. Feel the tightness in your hand and arm as you squeeze. Now drop the lemon. Notice how your muscles feel when they are relaxed. Take another lemon and squeeze. Try to squeeze this one harder than you did the first one. That's right. Real hard. Now drop the lemon and relax. See how much better your hand and arm feel when they are relaxed. Once again, take a lemon in your left hand and squeeze all the juice out. Don't leave a single drop. Squeeze hard. Good. Now relax and let the lemon fall from your hand.

(Repeat the process for the right hand and arm.)

## Arms and Shoulders

Pretend you are a furry, lazy cat. You want to stretch. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them up high over your head. Way back. Feel the pull in your shoulders. Stretch higher. Now just let your arms drop back to your side. Okay, kitten, let's stretch again. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them over your head. Pull them back, way back. Pull hard. Now let them drop

quickly. Good. Notice how your shoulders feel more relaxed. This time let's have a great big stretch. Try to touch the ceiling. Stretch your arms way out in front of you. Raise them way up high over your head. Push them way, way back. Notice the tension and pull in your arms and shoulders. Hold tight, now. Great. Let them drop very quickly and feel how good it is to be relaxed. It feels good and warm and lazy.

## **Jaw**

You have a giant jawbreaker bubble gum in your mouth. It's very hard to chew. Bite down on it. Hard! Let your neck muscles help you. Now relax. Just let your jaw hang loose. Notice that how good it feels just to let your jaw drop. Okay, let's tackle that jawbreaker again now. Bite down. Hard! Try to squeeze it out between your teeth. That's good. You're really tearing that gum up. Now relax again. Just let your jaw drop off your face. It feels good just to let go and not have to fight that bubble gum. Okay, one more time. We're really going to tear it up this time. Bite down. Hard as you can. Harder. Oh, you're really working hard. Good. Now relax. Try to relax your whole body. You've beaten that bubble gum. Let yourself go as loose as you can.

## **Face and Nose**

Here comes a pesky old fly. He has landed on your nose. Try to get him off without using your hands. That's right, wrinkle up your nose. Make as many wrinkles in your nose as you can. Scrunch your nose up real hard. Good. You've chased him away. Now you can relax your nose. Oops, here he comes back again. Right back in the middle of your nose. Wrinkle up your nose again. Shoo him off. Wrinkle it up hard. Hold it just as tight as you can. Okay, he flew away. You can relax your face. Notice that when you scrunch up your nose your cheeks and your mouth and your forehead and your eyes all help you, and they get tight too. So when you relax your nose, your whole body relaxes too, and that feels good. Oh-oh. This time that old fly has come back, but this time he's on your forehead. Make lots of wrinkles. Try to catch him between all those wrinkles. Hold it tight, now. Okay, you can let go. He's gone for good. Now you can just relax. Let your face go smooth, no wrinkles anywhere. Your face feels nice and smooth and relaxed.

## **Stomach**

Hey! Here comes a cute baby elephant. But he's not watching where he's going. He doesn't see you lying in the grass, and he's about to step on your stomach. Don't move. You don't have time to get out of the way. Just get ready for him. Make your stomach very hard. Tighten up your stomach muscles real tight. Hold it. It looks like he is going the other way. You can relax now. Let your stomach go soft. Let it be as relaxed as you can. That feels so much better. Oops, he's coming this way again. Get Ready. Tighten up your stomach. Real hard. If he steps on you when your stomach is hard, it won't hurt. Make your stomach into a rock. Okay, he's moving away again. You can relax now. Settle down, get comfortable, and relax. Notice the difference between a tight stomach and a relaxed one. That's how we want to feel---nice and loose and relaxed. You won't believe this, but this time he's coming your way and no turning around. He's headed straight for you. Tighten up. Tighten hard. Here he comes. This is really it. You've got to hold on tight. He's stepping on you. He's stepped over you. Now he's gone for good. You can relax completely. You're safe. Everything is okay, and you can feel nice and relaxed.

## **Legs and Feet**

Now pretend that you are standing barefoot in a big, fat mud puddle. Squish your toes down deep into the mud. Try to get your feet down to the bottom of the mud puddle. You'll probably need your legs to help you push. Push down, spread your toes apart, feel the mud squish up between your toes. Now step out of the mud puddle. Relax your feet. Let your toes go loose and feel how nice that it feels to be relaxed. Back in the mud puddle. Squish your toes down. Let your leg muscles help push your feet down. Push your feet. Hard. Try to squeeze that puddle dry. Okay. Come back out now. Relax your feet, relax your legs, and relax your toes. It feels so good to be relaxed. No tenseness anywhere. You feel kind of warm and tingly.

## **Conclusion**

Stay as relaxed as you can. Let your whole body go limp and feel all your muscles relaxed. In a few minutes I will ask you to open your eyes, and that will be the end of this practice session. As you go through the day, remember how good it feels to be relaxed. Sometimes you have to make yourself tighter

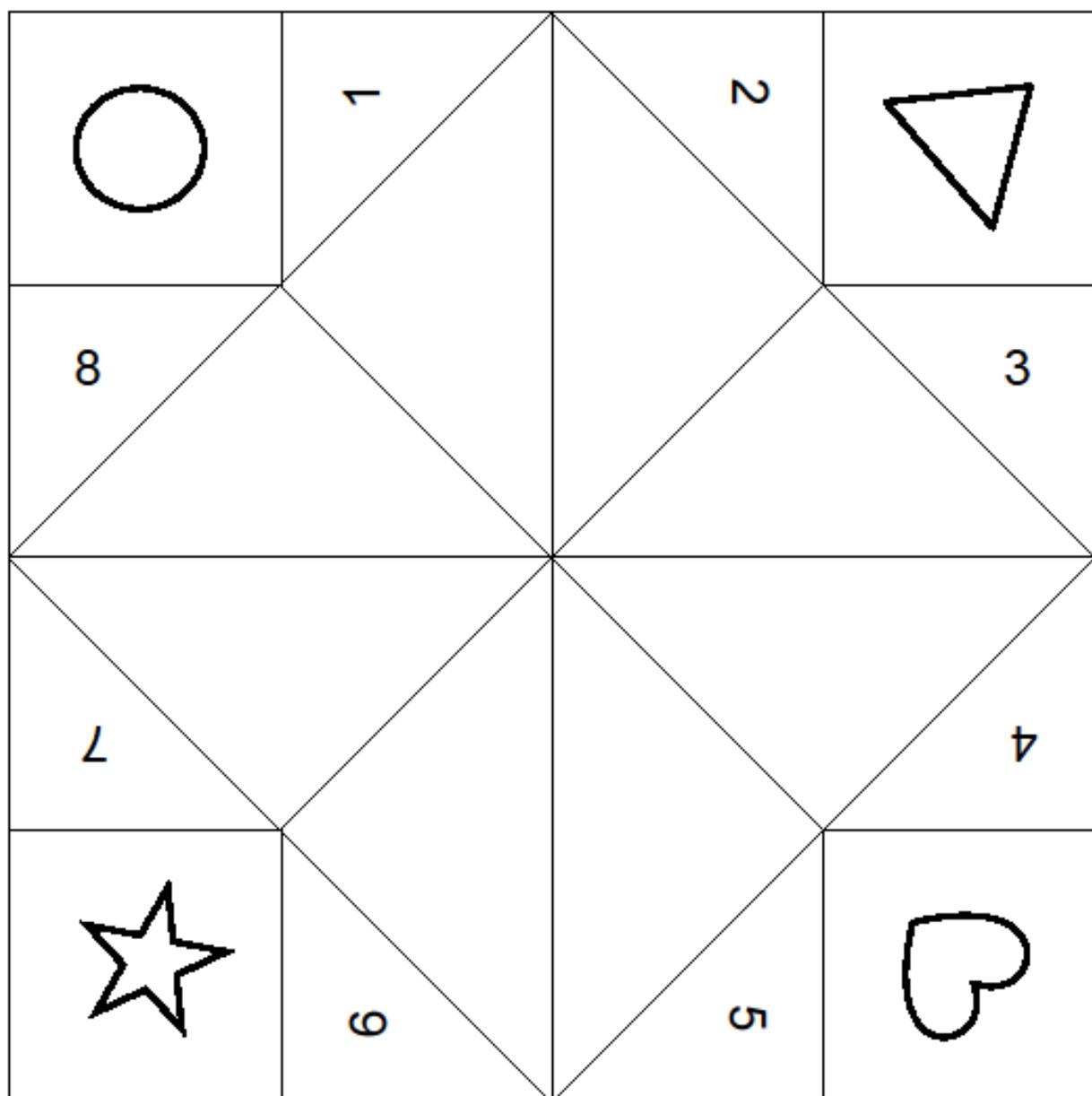
before you can be relaxed, just as we did in these exercises. Practice these exercises every day to get more and more relaxed. A good time to practice is at night, after you have gone to bed and the lights are out and you won't be disturbed. It will help you get to sleep. Then, when you are really a good relaxer, you can help yourself relax at school. Just remember the elephant, or the jaw breaker, or the mud puddle, and you can do our exercises and nobody will know. Today is a good day, and you are ready to feel very relaxed. You've worked hard and it feels good to work hard. Very slowly, now, open your eyes and wiggle your muscles around a little. Very good. You've done a good job. You're going to be a super relaxer.

<http://www.yourfamilyclinic.com/adhd/relax.htm>

## Relaxation Menu

This is a really great activity for your family to create relaxation menus, a great activity to compare family wide strategies between members. You can fill in the blank spaces with relaxation techniques. These can include the ones discussed and practiced in this guide, or could include strategies such as drawing, listening to music, yoga, playing sports or any other. The origami piece can then be used when a family member needs a moment to calm down and/or to relax. If you have trouble folding the origami piece, please see the tutorial in the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiiKFALZ7g8>

# Blank template



1. Print and cut round outside of cootie catcher
2. Fold in half and in half again
3. Open out, turn over so top is blank and fold each corner into the middle
4. Turn over and repeat
5. Turn over so you can see the pictures
6. Slide your thumb and your finger behind 2 of the pictures and press together so they bend round and touch
7. Turn over and repeat with the thumb and finger of the other hand for the other two pictures
8. All the pictures should now be at the front with centres touching and you are ready to use your cootie catcher!

## Mind Jar

A Mind Jar is a meditation tool to use whenever a child feels stressed, overwhelmed or upset. Imagine the glitter as your thoughts. When you shake the jar, imagine your head full of whirling thoughts, and then watch them slowly settle while you calm down. While we take some time off to practice mindfulness with this exercise, we help our body calm down.

### **Materials You Will Need:**

1 tbsp. glitter glue (any colour)

1 cup hot water

Food Colouring (to match your glitter colour)

Extra Glitter (if desired)

Small/medium-sized Mason Jar

### **Instructions:**

1. In the mason jar, mix the glitter glue and the hot water.
2. Add food colouring.
3. If you desire, add more glitter.
4. Seal the jar and shake it around a little bit.
5. Give the glue about five minutes to dissolve.
6. Now you have your mind jar!

For more information or a visual of the mind jar, please follow the link below:

<http://www.herewearetogether.com/2011/06/27/another-mind-jar/>

## Explaining to our children how our thoughts affect our feelings and our behaviours

The thoughts, feeling, behaviours activity is a great way to help family members understand that their thoughts affect their feelings and so affects their behaviours. The goal of this exercise is to try to help the children recognize their negative thoughts, and to challenge them with positive thoughts. (Ex: **I can't** do this = **I can** try my best)

Boundin' Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7erbdGDGWY>

Discussion Guide:

<http://media.wix.com/ugd/ca463f88eb2dd4a31541da83e207065e53c9a7.pdf>

## Extra Resources for Families

[www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)

A website and smart phone app that provides sensory relaxation and guided meditation for different time intervals.

<http://www.worrywisekids.org/node/1>

Assists parents, children, and youth in educating themselves on the different types of anxiety and what steps can be taken to treat them.

<http://psychologyfoundation.org/index.php/programs/kids-have-stress-too/>

Kids Have Stress Too! is a Canadian training program for parents and educators that helps them learn how to promote stress management in home and at school. Workshops are offered across the country, and are modified to address stress from preschool to junior high school.

<http://www.shared-care.ca/files/Phone Apps Revised December 2013.pdf>

A list of free phone apps that can assist children, youth, and young adults with managing their anxiety symptoms and moods.

<http://www.shared-care.ca/files/Patient Resources on Teen Depression Revised April 2011.pdf>

A collection of self-help resources for youth with depression as well as parents and care-providers who are working with depressed youth.

<https://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome>

An online 'gym' tool that helps people struggling with anxiety and depression to modify their thinking patterns using cognitive therapy techniques.

<http://www.innerhealthstudio.com/relaxation-scripts.html>

A website dedicated to providing you with relaxation scripts and techniques. If you prefer audio scripts, you can purchase them for a small fee on the website.

<http://www.familypastimes.com/>

Family Pastimes designs co-operative family games that teach the importance of interdependence, shared problem-solving, and resilience. Descriptions of and prices for the games are available on the website.

<http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-parents.htm>

Reaching In Reaching Out is an evidence-based program that helps everyone, from children to adults, from managers to child and youth workers, to develop and promote resilience in the home, the school, and the workplace.

<http://kidshealth.org/>

KidsHealth.org provides three different entryways to its site, depending on whether you are a parent, a child, or a youth. Different resources are provided for each group, and age-appropriate discussions and advice are offered.

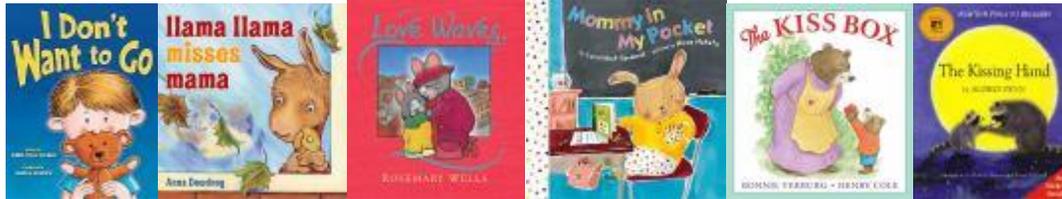
<http://www.cw.bc.ca/library/pdf/pamphlets/Mighty%20Moe1.pdf>

“Might Moe” is an anxiety workbook for children between 5-11-years-old, and is meant to be worked through by the child with the assistance of a parent, a counsellor, or another certified mental health professional. Through helping Moe manage his anxiety, children learn coping skills that can help them when they are facing difficult or stress-producing situations.

# Storybooks for Children About Anxiety and Stress

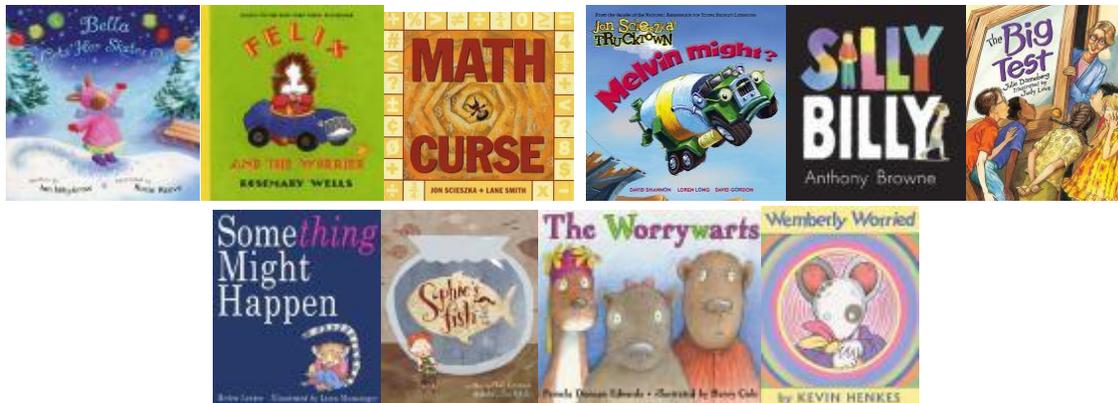
This list was provided to us by the Ottawa Public library. Please visit any of their locations to borrow one or more of these books.

## Separation Anxiety



I Don't Want to Go by Addie Meyer Sanders  
Llama Llama Misses Mama by Anna Dewdney  
Love Waves by Rosemary Wells  
Mommy in my Pocket by Carol Hunt Senderak  
The Kiss Box by Bonnie Verburg  
The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

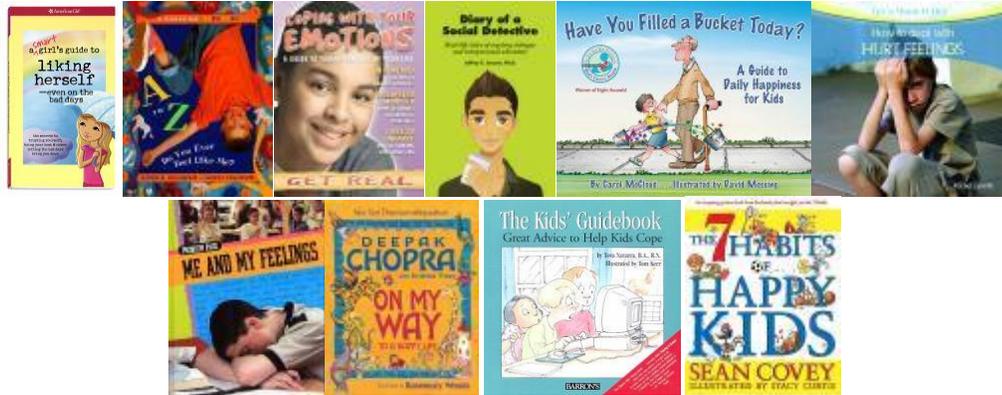
## Worry



Bella Gets Her Skates On by Ian Whybrow  
Felix the Worrier by Rosemary Wells  
Math Curse by Jon Scieszka  
Melvin Might? By Jon Scieszka  
Ready for Anything by Keiko Kasza  
Silly Billy by Anthony Browne  
Something Might Happen by Helen Lester  
Sophie's Fish by A.E. Cannon  
The Big Test by Julie Danneberg  
The Worrywarts by Pamela Duncan Edwards

Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes

## Life Skills & Emotional Awareness



A Smart Girl's Guide to Liking Herself – Even on the Bad Days by Laurie E. Zelinger

A to Z, Do You Ever Feel Like Me? By Bonnie Hausman

Coping with Your Emotions by Kate Tym

Diary of a Social Detective by Jeffrey E. Jessum

Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids by Carol McCloud

How to Deal with Hurt Feelings by Rachel Lynette

Me and My Feelings by Jillian Powell

On My Way to a Happy Life by Deepak Chopra

The Kids Guidebook: Great Advice to Help Kids Cope by Tova Navarra

The 7 Habbits of Happy Kids by Sean Covey



## Happiness 😊



Feelings by Aliko

Happy by Miles van Hout

Happy Pig Day by Mo Willems

How Are You Peeling? Foods with Moods by Saxton Freymann

My Brave Year of Firsts by Jamie Lee Curtis

The Feel Good Book by Todd Parr

[www.BiblioOttawaLibrary.on.ca](http://www.BiblioOttawaLibrary.on.ca)

## Getting to know more about the Friends for Life Program

### **FRIENDS PROGRAMS**

FRIENDS for Life is an evidence-based anxiety intervention program for children ages 8-11. It was developed by Australian child psychologist Dr. Paula Barret, and is used worldwide to help children identify their anxiety and learn to cope with it in constructive and healthy ways.

FUN Friends is a sister program of FRIENDS for Life and is geared towards children between the ages of 4-7.

MY Friends has been developed to address the specific needs of youth aged 12-16.

The Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre offers the 8-10-week FRIENDS programs throughout the year. You can call the Intake Counsellor at the centre to place your child on the waiting list at 613-591-3686.

For more information on the FRIENDS programs, please visit WOCRC's [Friends page](#).

Get to know more about Friends: <http://www.friendsparentprogram.com/>