

## Breathing Exercises with Children






★ Stress affects our bodies. When we feel stressed we tend to take fewer and shorter breaths. Learning the technique of deep, slow breathing can help calm us when we feel anxious.

★ To teach deep breathing to young children:



- Instruct them to fill their stomach with air like a balloon; you can have them put one hand on their stomach and watch it move up and down and the other hand on their chest which should not move.
- Next help them to slow down their breathing. A good strategy is to count to four as they breathe in, and then count to four as they breathe out. If a child is struggling to understand the idea of slow breathing, have them practice blowing bubbles; typically the slower the breath the more bubbles the child is able to produce.
- Using pinwheels, feathers, or other imaginary props are good ways to practice. Lots of modeling and practice will help children slowly develop this skill which they can use whenever they feel anxious or mad.

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Blowing Out Birthday Candles</b></p>	<p>Have child hold up one hand. Together you can count out five birthday candles. After, blow each one of them out using a long breath (about 5 seconds). Use your hand to go slowly away (in front) from your body to mark the time needed to exhale and then come back in for the shorter inhale breath.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Blowing up an Imaginary Balloon</b></p>	<p>Tell your child that you are going to slowly blow up balloons together. Pretend to take a balloon out of your pretend pocket and put it to your mouth and have your child do the same. Cupping your hands in front of your mouth take a breath then exhale and move your hands slowly away so that it looks like you are holding a balloon which is being inflated. Try about three breaths to inflate the balloon. When it is inflated, tell your child that you will let it go very slowly and make a deflating noise moving your hands in together. Put the balloon back in your pretend pocket so you will have it for the next time you need it.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hot Soup</b></p>	<p>Show your child how to cup his hands to pretend to hold a bowl of soup. Tell him that the soup smells delicious, but it is too hot to eat so you must blow on it to cool it down. Breathe in to smell the delicious soup and then blow slowly and gently on the soup to cool it. Repeat this 3 or 4 times. Then enjoy eating the soup together.</p>