

# Calming techniques

for Early Years



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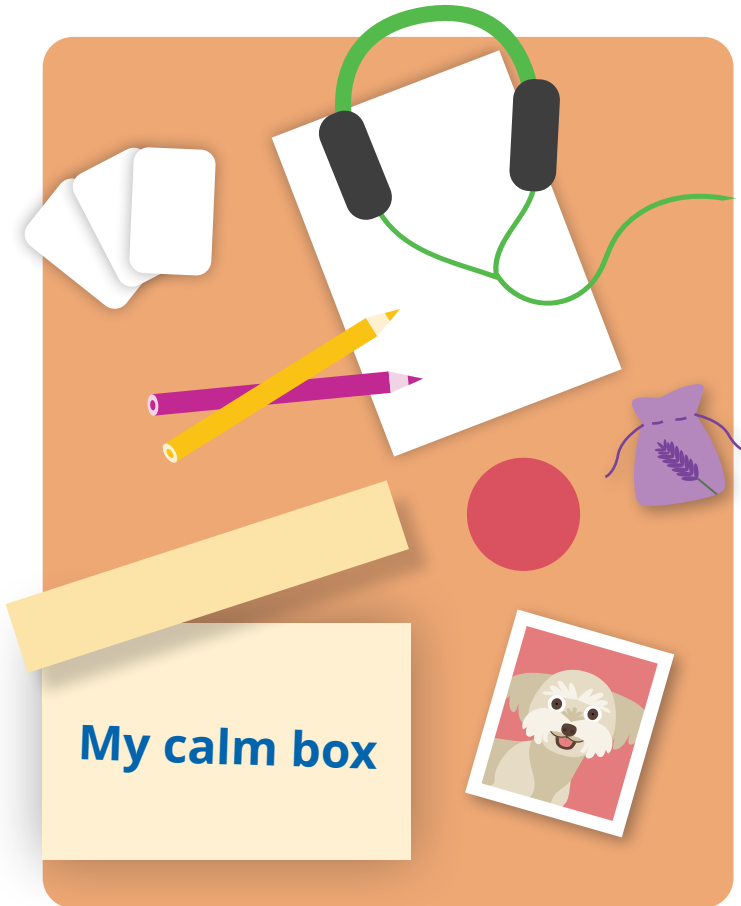
**Wiltshire Council**

## Calm Box Ideas

This box can be created for an individual child, small group or whole class. It can be an old decorated shoe box or basket containing physical objects.

If it has a lid it can be more intriguing, you could add a label 'My/Our Calm Box'.

In the box put a small range of objects that are:



**Tactile:** squidgy ball (stress ball), soft toy, smooth pebble, short piece of ribbon or silky fabric or a physical puzzle like a Rubix Cube, play dough.

**Visual:** a photo of a pet or favourite animal, funny pictures or pictures of scenes, coloured water bottle or one containing glitter, favourite picture book.

**Scented:** Lavender bag, aroma dough.

**Colouring:** some pencils and paper.

**Activity Cards:** visualisation (close your eyes and go to a special place that makes you feel happy and safe), get a drink of water and drink it slowly, sorting activity, stretch like a cat.

**Sound:** CD of parent singing favourite songs, small rain maker.

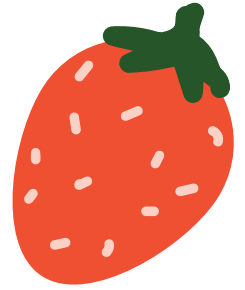
## Calm Down with Take five Breathing

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1. Stretch your hand out like a star.
2. Get your pointer finger ready to trace your fingers up and down.
3. Slide up each finger slowly – slide down the other side.
4. Breathe in through your nose – out through your mouth.
5. Put it together and breathe in as you slide up and breathe out as you slide down. Keep going until you have finished tracing your hand.

## Pretend

Think about smelling a strawberry – pretend to hold a strawberry up to your nose and breathe in as if you are smelling it.



Pretend to hold a candle in front of you, perhaps hold up a finger and pretend to blow it out slowly. Repeat three times or more if needed.

## Calm Kids practices. Make friends with your breath!

Your breath is a very helpful friend, you can use it to:

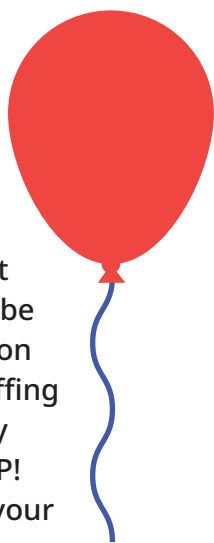
- Help make your mind feel calmer and quieter
- Energise your body to help you feel awake and alive
- Help you concentrate and stay focused by bathing your brain in much needed oxygen
- Help you to let go of troubles and worries and make you feel more positive

The three main ways you can use your breath to bring about feelings of calmness, relaxation, concentration and focus are:

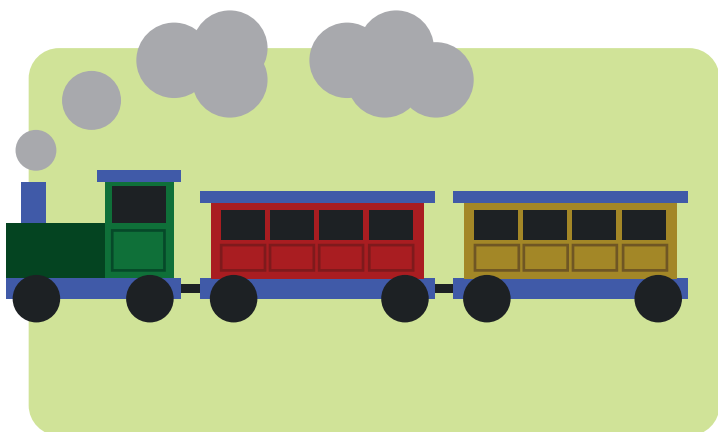
1. To move your body with the breath
2. To control your breath e.g. to make your exhalation longer than your inhalation
3. To make specific sounds with the breath

**The Elevator breath** – Can be done lying down or sitting. As you breathe in feel and imagine the breath coming in through the nose and going down towards your belly (like the elevator going down). As you breathe out feel and imagine the breath coming back up and out through the nose (like the elevator going up). Be aware of your chest and belly getting bigger as you breathe in. Then your belly and chest get smaller as you breathe out. Can you start to make the elevator take longer to go back up than to go down? Count the elevator down for two and back up for a count of four. Now, let your breath settle back to its natural rhythm and notice how you feel.

**Balloon breath**– As you breathe in imagine you are filling up a balloon in your tummy, feel your chest and tummy getting bigger. you breathe out imagine you are letting all the air out of your balloon, feel your tummy and chest getting smaller. Now let your back be floppy and imagine you are a balloon with no air in. Blow yourself up sniffing in through your nose and gradually filling up and lifting up tall.....POP! Let the breath out slowly through your teeth with a hissing breath, folding yourself back down.



**Train breath** – Bend your arms at the elbows. As you breathe in through the nose bringing the elbows back and then blow the breath out slowly through the mouth as the arms push forward. Keep going, then when you finish bring your hands to rest on your knees and close your eyes and notice how you feel.



**Rainbow arms with sound** – Start with the palms facing the ceiling. Inhale and lift the arms up in a rainbow shape until the palms of hands touch above the head, turn the backs of the hands to touch each other and exhale the arms back down, turn the palms to face upwards again for the start of next breath. On the next exhalation when the arms are coming down make a sound with the breath. First time aaahhh (mouth wide open) sending the breath into the chest, second time ooooo (mouth in a small circle shape) sending the breath into the throat and third time mmmm (lips stay closed) sending the breath into the whole of your head. Let your breath settle back to its natural rhythm and notice how you feel.



**Lion breath** – Kneeling count 10 lions' claws and place them on your knees. Breath in lift the hands up the side of your body and let the breath out with a 'roar sound' as you lean forward slightly, pulling your hands back, look up and sticking your tongue out (!!). Make sure the sound is made by your breath!

Repeat a few times then put your hands on your knees, close your eyes and see how you feel inside?

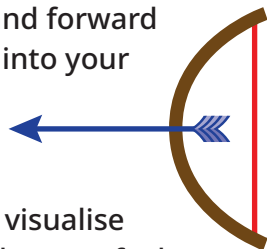
**Bird Breath**- in a standing position inhale the arms up and out to the side, exhale your hands to your chest and bow your head, inhale the arms forward and up lifting your head back up straight and then exhale the arms all the way back down to the sides of your body. Repeat five times. Stand quietly with the eyes closed and notice how you feel.

**Sunbursts** – Breathe in as you bend your knees and lift your arms above your head, exhale fold forwards with your knees bent, inhale take your arms out to the side keeping your back flat (stay looking at the floor), exhale your arms and head down and look at your knees, inhale all the way back up to standing and exhale the hands down to the chest. Repeat a few times then stand quietly with the eyes closed and notice how you feel.



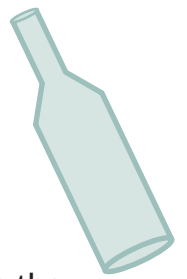
**Sea breath** – Direct the breath in and out through the throat and imagine you are sighing at the same time; the breath will start to make a sound like the sea. If you find this difficult open your mouth a little bit. Rub your hands together hard and then slowly take them apart – can you feel the energy? Now slowly take the hands a little away from each other as you breathe in and bring them slowly back to nearly touch as you breathe out. As you keep the movement going close your eyes and image the waves comes up onto the shore as you breathe in and the waves draw back into the ocean as you breathe out. Feel the energy between the hands as you work with this. When you bring your hands back to the side of your body stand quietly for a moment and notice how you feel.

**Archer** – This practice is used to target positive feelings, positive goals etc. Standing, step one leg forward and lift the same arm up in front of you, stretch into the palm of the hand and look over the middle finger off out into the distance. Say to yourself your positive statement or goal inside your head (e.g. I am a thoughtful caring friend, I am going to improve my hand writing etc). Pull your imaginary string back on your bow, take a deep breath in and exhale out of your mouth bringing your hand forward sending your imaginary bow into your target. Step forward, stand with your eyes closed and imagine and feel you have achieved your target or visualise how your positive feeling makes you feel. Repeat on the other side.



**Fisherman** – Imagine you are standing in front of a river. Open up your imaginary bag and put into it anything you want to get rid of e.g. any negative feelings, things that might be worrying you. Put three big imaginary rocks into the bag too and throw it into the imaginary river in front of you and watch it sink to the bottom. Now think of something positive that will make you feel really happy, pick up your imaginary bottle and blow your happy thought into the bottle and put the cork in the top and then throw your bottle of happy positive thoughts into the river and watch it float on the top of the water. Step one foot forward and bring the hands together

in front of you with the arms straight, (your arms are like your fishing rod). Bring your hands over your shoulder and then forward three times with three sniffs through the nose and on the third exhalation a breath out through the mouth. When you have hooked your bottle lift it up and unhook it. Take the cork out of the bottle and pour the happy positive feelings over the top of your head and feel them melt all the way down your body all the way down to your toes.



**Woodchopper** – The movement - arms forward, arms to the side, arms forward, bend the knees and bring the arms down in a chopping movement. The breath - three sniffs in through the nose (one with each movement of the arms) and then out of the mouth as you bend forward. Keep going for about five times then stand tall and still and notice how you feel. Can you feel the oxygen buzzing in your brain and tingling in your fingertips?

**One breath one sound** – Takes a deep breath in and makes any sound with your long exhalation, everyone in the group then takes a deep breath in and repeats your same sound. This sound breath can also be used to show how you are feeling and help let go of negative feelings. Take a deep breath in and let how you are feeling out with a sound as you breathe out, this might help you be in a better place to talk about how you are feeling afterwards. The key is in the use of the breath bringing about a feeling of release or letting go and whoever is listening not judging the sound you have made.

**Feather fingers** – Bring your hands in front of your face and spread the fingers wide. Take a deep breath in and blow the breath out softly and slowly letting this 'warm wind' touch each of your feather fingers. Keep going backwards and forwards along the fingers slowly taking deep breaths in and long slow breaths out. Try it with your eyes closed? Can you feel the warm wind on each of your feathers? When you finish bring your hands down and see how you feel.



**Colour relaxation** - Lying down you are going to imagine different colours in different parts of your body.

- Imagine your legs are filled with the colour red – the crimson red of poppies
- Imagine your lower back is filled with the colour orange – the bright vibrant colour of freshly squeezed oranges.
- Imagine your tummy is filled with the colour yellow – the golden yellow of the sun.
- Imagine your chest is filled with the colour green – the green of fresh new leaves.
- Imagine your throat and neck is filled with the colour blue – the blue of the sky on a hot clear summer's day.
- Imagine your head is filled with the colour purple – the velvety purple of the night's sky.
- Imagine there is a shower of little white sparkly stars falling all over your head making you feel very happy, peaceful, calm and relaxed.
- Now let the whole of your body feel happy, peaceful, calm and relaxed by letting the sparkly stars flow down your whole body filling your head, neck chest, tummy, back and legs.
- Know that these feelings of being happy, calm, peaceful and relaxed are always with you and you can come back to these lovely feelings by doing your Calm Kids practices.
- Slowly wiggle your fingers and toes take some deeper breaths, have a stretch, hug your knees up onto your chest and then roll over and sit up slowly.

## Grounding Techniques

Grounding is a technique that helps to calm someone in the present. Grounding skills can be helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or intense anxiety in children. They help to regain mental focus from an often intensely emotional state.

When a child is in crisis, reasoning does not work. They are on sensory overdrive. You need to help them calm down. It's important to remain calm and be as supportive as possible. Listen to the fears and assess what the need is. Every behaviour has a reason, even 'meltdowns,' so it is crucial to determine the cause of the behaviour and what need was being met.

**Grounding Activity Ideas:** Encouraging a child to use and recognise things around them using their senses can be effective

**Play calming music**– soft, soothing music can actually slow the heartbeat.

**Take a walk**– sometimes, just moving and experiencing nature can be calming

**Deep Breathing**– Breathing techniques or if a child cannot understand this concept then just simple bubble play!

**Familiar Smells** – Spraying a smell familiar to the child such as Mums perfume or Dads aftershave onto a tissue or handkerchief or even use essential oils. The child can keep this in their pocket.

**Cloud Watching** – Lay on the ground and watch the clouds float by – what shapes can you see?

Watch this video link for further ideas around Grounding: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElQMayn1SRQ&t=73s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElQMayn1SRQ&t=73s)

